



# INDEPENDENT

35p

Republic of Ireland 45p

MONDAY 9 OCTOBER 1995

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SECTION TWO

**MAKING CRIME PAY**  
Baker, Mosley, White, America's  
and the black novelist

'Arrogance and harshness  
damaging our democracy'

Alan Howarth

'Nothing will distract us  
from the task ahead'

John Major

'He cannot stomach the Tory  
party lurching to the right'

John Prescott

'Batty ... It is an act of  
complete treachery'

Alan Clark

## Warning to Tories as Howarth goes

COLIN BROWN and  
PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES

The Conservative Party was reeling yesterday from the unprecedented defection of one of its most respected backbench MPs to the Labour Party with a warning that between 30 and 40 Tory MPs shared his concerns at the right-wing direction of John Major's government.

The timing of Alan Howarth's defection caused the maximum damage to Conservative morale on the eve of the Tory party conference in Blackpool. Ministers reacted angrily, mounting a damage limitation exercise by questioning his state of mind, and accusing him of being 'vindictive'.

Some senior Conservative Party sources suggested his defection was linked to the break-up of his marriage. Alan Clark, the outspoken former defence minister, described his action as 'batty'. But friends rallied behind Mr Howarth, 51, a former education minister.

Mr Howarth, the Tory MP for Stratford on Avon, one of the safest seats in the country with a 23,000 majority at the last election, was given a cool response by the Prime Minister during a telephone conversation yesterday after announcing his decision to quit the Tory party, accusing Mr Major's government of 'an arrogance of power'.

After their meeting, Mr Major said: 'I profoundly disagree with his analysis of the Conservative Party but nothing will distract us from the task ahead.'

The defection - secured after weeks of careful negotiation with Tony Blair and the Labour leader's close allies - cuts the Prime Minister's technical majority in the Commons to just five votes, and risks forcing Mr Major to go to the country in a general election before he planned.

Exclusive: Howarth in his own words

**The party has given up on fairness**

'At long last we have a party that is both committed to social justice and tough-minded about the practicalities of government. That is why I have joined new Labour ... A defector writes, page 19'

PLUS: Tory schisms laid bare; Disillusion spreads, page 2  
Redwood on that letter; A town in shock, page 3  
Alan in Arthur's seat: Leading article, page 18

Mr Howarth ruled out the possibility of resigning his seat and forcing a by-election.

John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, hailed it as a devastating blow for Mr Major on the eve of the Tory conference. He said: 'Alan Howarth is a well respected and senior member of the Conservative Party who has now made it clear he can't stomach the Tory party lurching further and further to the right.'

In an exclusive article for the Independent, Mr Howarth says: 'With the honourable exceptions of a handful of beleaguered ministers and backbenchers, today's Conservative Party has effectively given up on the basic ethical responsibilities of government: to promote fairness and to hold society together.'

There was no sign of any further defections, but several Tory MPs in the One Nation group contacted by the Independent yesterday confirmed they shared Mr Howarth's misgivings. Tim Rathbone, a senior 'One Nation' Tory MP: 'I am sorry he took that step. I completely understand his concerns. They are the concerns which are shared by an awful lot of people. It might be a dramatic shot across the bows of those people who advocate a further shift to the hard-edged right wing policies.'

'It is a symptom of the strain which is going on in the centre-left of the Conservative Party,' said Peter Temple-Morris, leader of the Tory Maceod group. 'This is an exceptional event, but I respect him for it.'

Jim Lester, a former employment minister and close ally of Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, confirmed that 30 to 40 MPs shared Mr Howarth's concerns, while rejecting his support for Labour. But some on the left of the Conservative Party were privately contemplating the break-up of the Tory party after the general election, which they expect to lose. A Gallup poll for the Daily Telegraph shows Labour's lead before its conference to have increased from 28 to 30 per cent.

One prominent Tory MP said he was ready to join the Liberal Democrats if there was a realignment of British politics.

Tories on the left said Mr Major's leadership contest has secured his own position in the party, but the drift to the right is 'inevitable' and will accelerate under his successor, whom they expect to be Michael Portillo.

Mr Howarth's friends accused the Conservative leadership of abandoning the

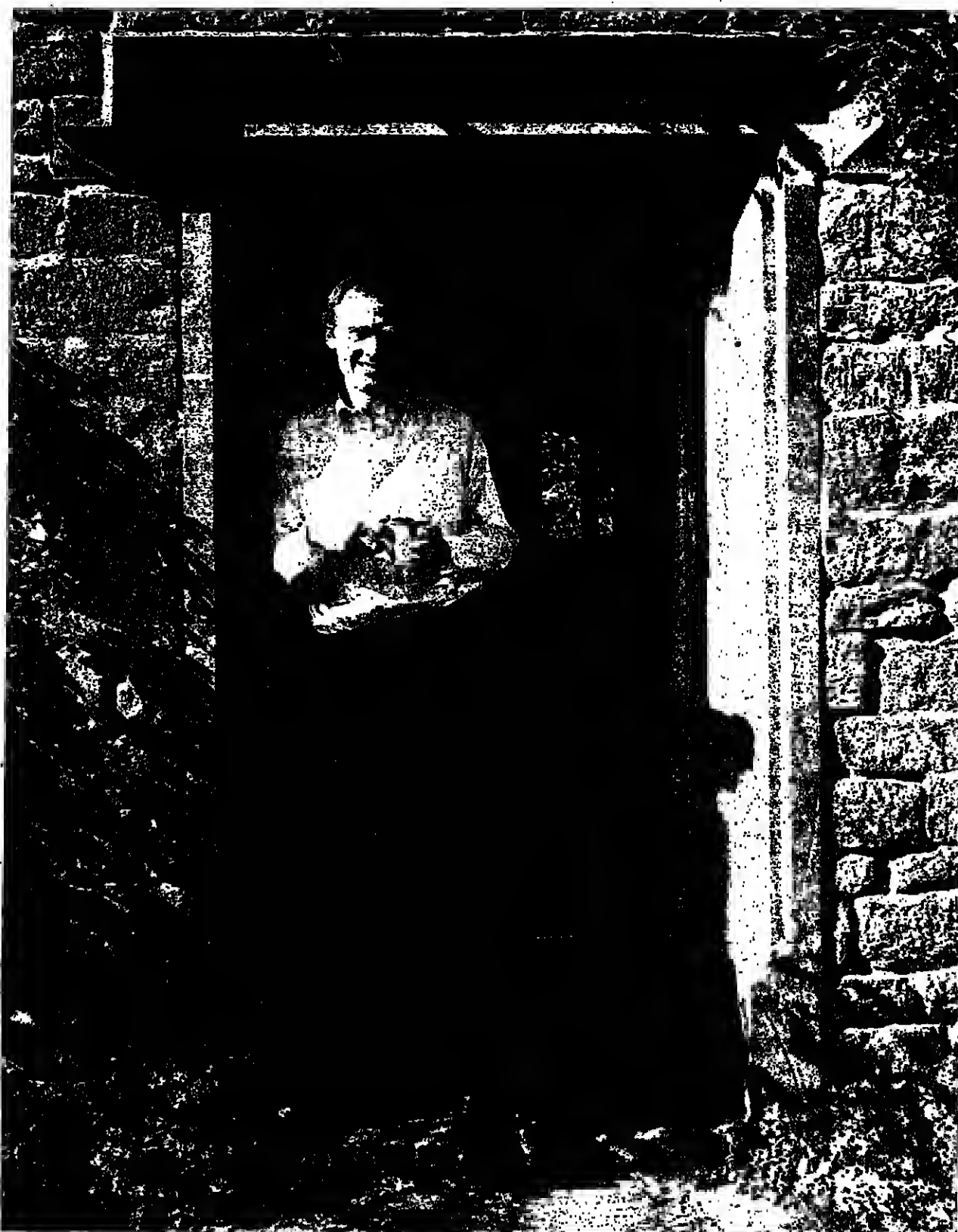
centre-ground of British politics to Mr Blair. They warned ministers against using this week's Tory party conference to stake out a more right-wing agenda by a string of announcements. It is expected that the Chancellor will make tax cuts the centrepiece of the Tory fight-back, and Sir George Young, the Secretary of State for Transport, who is also on the left of the party, will announce plans to privatise Railtrack, in spite of widespread misgivings about the sale of British Rail.

Attacking that strategy, Mr Howarth says in the Independent: 'The Treasury's obsessive negativism, the Government's fetish about reducing public expenditure as a proportion of GDP and Conservative backbenchers' desperation to ingratiate themselves with the voters through tax cuts conspire to prevent the investment we need in public services.'

A key role in the build-up to the dramatic event was played by Margaret Hodge, the MP for Barking and close confidante of Tony Blair. While a lengthy conversation between Mr Howarth and Mr Blair at the Labour leader's home on 26 September was a crucial turning point, the distinct possibility of Mr Howarth switching to Labour was the subject of discussions for a few months beforehand, with the secret known only to Mr Howarth, Mr Blair and Ms Hodge.

However, Arthur Scargill, the NUM leader, accused Mr Blair of 'prostituting' Labour's socialist principles. 'It is little wonder people like Mr Howarth see no difficulty in joining Labour,' he said.

Mr Howarth's constituency met yesterday to discuss replacing him with another Conservative candidate.



Defection: Alan Howarth yesterday outside his home in Lower Tysoe, Warwickshire

Photograph: Joel Chant

## Eleven women beheaded under Islamic 'justice'

ROBERT FISK  
Middle East Correspondent

Saudi Arabia's system of Islamic 'justice' has notched up a new tally of victims: 11 women publicly beheaded in less than three years. The names of the women subjected to decapitation in public squares - and details of their executions after trials that were sometimes little more than a legal charade - are revealed for the first time today in the Independent.

Two were a mother and daughter, killed together by a Saudi executioner who cut off their heads with a sword in the Saudi port city of Dhahran less than two months ago.

Eight of the 11 women were convicted of murder after secret trials, three others for drugs-related offences. Six were Saudi citizens. A Christian Filipino maid was beheaded in

Dammam for killing her employer, his wife and son, after alleging the son had tried to rape her. In the emirate of Ras al-Khaimah, a Sri Lankan maid was shot by firing squad in April after allegedly killing her employer's child. She was 19.

Since January this year, 176 men also have been beheaded in Saudi Arabia.

During the same three-year period, hundreds of women - most of them foreign workers from the Philippines and Sri Lanka - have been lashed in Arab Gulf prisons, usually for alleged sexual misdemeanours; dozens have fled to other countries after claiming they had been beaten or sexually abused by employers. Their plight is causing growing horror among human rights organisations, which have been told by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states that punishments are an internal affair, inflicted

according to the Islamic laws.

In the emirate of Abu Dhabi yesterday, the parents of Sarah Balahegan, 16, who is facing a death sentence for allegedly killing her employer when she was only 14, greeted their daughter in prison at al-Ain - but with no indication that an appeal court hearing today will reverse her sentence. She says that the man she killed had tried to rape her, but opinion in the Arab Gulf is against her.

A news magazine in the United Arab Emirates has called Filipina maids a 'minefield' and referred to the convicted girl as a 'justly sentenced killer'. A Saudi intellectual has described the beheading of women as part of new security measures that reflect the fear of the Saudi royal family that instability can endanger their regime.

West shaded, page 11  
Leading article, page 18

## And finally, 'News at Ten' gives way to 'Cracker'

MATHEW HORSMAN

The Independent Television Commission yesterday strongly rebuked ITV over its plans to delay the News at Ten by 15 minutes next Monday to accommodate an extended episode of the hit programme Cracker.

The ITC is concerned that the decision to delay the news for a 75-minute television drama was a 'slippery slope down which ITV should not be going'.

The surprise rescheduling move, which some saw as a testing of the ITC's resolve, is sure to reopen the old debate about the positioning of the flagship bulletin. Many ITV companies have long wanted to shift it to make way for the uninterrupted broadcast of films and drama series.

The ITC, which by late last night had not yet been informed officially of the resched-



News at 10.15: Trevor McDonald and Robbie Coltrane

uling, said: 'This certainly seems to be in conflict with the conditions of the [ITV] licence.' ITV is required to air half an hour of live news in peak viewing time. In the past, ITV has broadcast extended-length episodes of its series such as Prime Suspect on successive evenings or over the weekend, when News at Ten does not run.

The matter is to be considered by commission staff today

and could be referred to members of the full board for further action if the rescheduling plan goes ahead. Possible sanctions include fines and a shortening of the franchise period.

Until now, delays to the start of the news have been due to live sporting events deemed of exceptional interest, coverage of breaking events or broadcasts of national importance.

Dear Marcus Plautin, section two

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IN BRIEF			
<b>Franc under attack</b> The French franc is expected to come under further pressure today in what looks like becoming a major test of President Chirac's commitment to the 'franc fort' policy of linking the franc to the German mark with the ultimate target of monetary union in 1999. Page 20	<b>Army 'sponsorship' row</b> The Ministry of Defence is resisting plans for British Aerospace, GEC and other defence suppliers to have their own 'sponsored' units in the armed forces, in which they would lend employees to the MoD to help service and maintain equipment. Page 4	<b>G7 backs dollar</b> Finance ministers at the Group of Seven meeting in Washington sent currency markets a clear signal of their intention to underpin the dollar against the yen. Kenneth Clarke held out the hope of Budget tax cuts 'but only if we have public spending under control'. Page 20	<b>Extremist threat</b> The extreme right-wing group Combat 18 is believed to be planning violent disruption during England's football match against Norway in Oslo on Wednesday. Page 5
<b>School inspectors war</b> A price war has broken out between rival groups of private and public sector secondary school inspectors, forcing down fees to a point where they say quality is at risk. Page 8			



COMMENT	
<b>Brian Mawhinney:</b> The Conservative chairman gives his reaction to Alan Howarth's defection. Page 19	<b>Bill Rodgers:</b> A previous political defector warns Alan Howarth how life will be now. Page 18
<b>Essay:</b> Fascism is alive and well - we just refuse to call it what it is. Page 17	<b>Miles Kingston:</b> pays tribute to Al Jolson. Page 19
<b>Leading article:</b> 'The Saudis and their Gulf neighbours will try to excuse their behaviour by claiming that threats to civil order must be met with a 'strong hand''. Page 18	
<b>Weather:</b> Scotland and Northern Ireland will be mostly cloudy with rain. England and Wales will enjoy some sunshine, but with rain to the north and west. Section Two, page 21	

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## THE HOWARTH DEFLECTION

## Tory schisms laid bare by shock decision

STEVE BOGGAN and COLIN BROWN

Leading Tories reacted to Alan Howarth's defection with almost universal shock and anger yesterday, though there was genuine sympathy and respect for him among MPs on the left of the Tory Party.

Brian Mawhinney, the Conservative Party chairman, dismissed the defection as "eccentric" and "bizarre". Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, appeared to suggest there was a need to be concerned about Mr Howarth's mental health. "There is a certain vindictiveness in the choice of the date of the announcement. What seems to me to be rather a vindictive decision is out of character with his usual function."

"I am quite concerned about what I think this demonstrates about his state of mind. He is obviously going through quite

a turbulent time," she said on Sky News.

Alan Clark, the outspoken former defence minister, said: "The kindest thing you can say about Alan Howarth is that he is batty. It is an act of complete treachery."

Perhaps the most aggrieved at being kept in the dark over his decision - save for the officials of his own constituency association - was the Prime Minister.

Mr Major said: "I profoundly disagree with his analysis of the Conservative Party but nothing will distract us from the task ahead."

Chancellor Kenneth Clarke said Mr Howarth had lost his political way, and Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine said the MP was "out of touch with what the public want".

But Labour was gleeful at its propaganda coup, with deputy party leader John Prescott hailing it as a devastating blow for Mr Major on the eve of the Tory



Chorus of disapproval: (from left) Conservative Party Chairman Dr Brian Mawhinney, Education and Employment Secretary Gillian Shephard, former defence minister Alan Clark and Public Services Minister Roger Freeman

conference, on which so much depends. He said: "Alan Howarth is a well respected and senior member of the Conservative Party who has now made it clear he can't stomach the Tory party lurching further and further in the Right."

Derek Foster, Labour chief whip, said: "I am confident that the Parliamentary Labour Party will gladly accept Alan Howarth's application for the Labour whip and welcome him in their ranks."

"We all recognise that this is

a very significant conversion, especially from a man of proven ability who will not have taken his decision lightly," he said.

Speaking on the BBC's *Breakfast with Frost*, Mr Mawhinney said he believed Mr Howarth should immediately

stand down and fight a by-election - something the defector has no intention of doing.

"The people of Stratford-on-Avon will form their own conclusions about a man who won't offer himself to them," he said. "It seems to be a bit of an

eccentric decision, doesn't it? He made an announcement that affects him and deprives the people of Stratford of their representative that they voted for."

"The idea that Alan is doing his electors some sort of favour by moving from supporting this Government to aligning himself in the Opposition with Dennis Skinner and Tony Benn and John Prescott - frankly, that is bizarre."

Public Services Minister Roger Freeman said he had not been surprised by the defection. "Alan Howarth has been increasingly isolated on the backbenches over the last couple of years," he said. "I respect Alan's views, but he's been out of step with the Parliamentary Conservative Party for some considerable period of time and so [the] announcement didn't come as a surprise to me."

"This is a very human problem for him. He clearly felt very strongly that he had more sym-

pathy with the Labour Party. His own views had changed. I think the honourable thing for him to do is resign and stand again."

But backbench colleagues on the left of the party were sympathetic. A former minister, Jim Lester, said: "Alan has made some very penetrating speeches over a very considerable period of time. One shares many of his instincts as far as the Conservative Party is concerned but I am surprised he should join the Labour Party."

Former Prime Minister Sir Edward Heath urged other one-nation Tories not to follow Mr Howarth. "What I would say to all those who think the same way in the party is: the job is not to leave the party but to do everything we possibly can to persuade the party to carry out the policies which we used to have," he said.

Among others, there was some understanding, although no indication of any further defection plans.

Question of morals: Government attitudes towards social issues proved to be decisive in the dramatic move to Labour

## Signals that were there for all to see

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES Political Correspondent

The Conservative Party swung frantically into the biggest damage limitation exercise in recent political history yesterday. The tactic was basically smear: the message, to question Alan Howarth's state of mind.

But the notion of an overwrought man taking leave of his senses looks pretty far from the reality. The 51-year-old MP is one of the most intelligent, assiduous and thoughtful. Moreover, the conversion - or certainly the realisation that he could no longer support today's Tories - has been long been discernible.

Elected as MP for Stratford-upon-Avon in 1983, the blue-chip seat once occupied by John Profumo, he was one of the dozen founder-members of the Thatcherite No Turning Back group that year. In all, he served - apparently contentedly - under Margaret Thatcher from 1979 to 1992. But while a staunch supporter of key Tory policies such as opt-out schools and student loans (along with transforming polytechnics into universities as a minister) his affinity with fellow No Turning Backers such as Peter Lilley, now Secretary of State for Social Security, and Michael Forsyth, Secretary of State for Scotland, was limited.

From the early 1990s, an unease with the direction of the party began to reveal itself in parliamentary debates with a relentless regularity, and later, in newspaper articles. He voted against his pet hate, the Jobseekers Bill, voted for Labour's amendment in the debate on the Nolan Committee recommendations, railed against restrictions on income support for mortgage payments and abstained on a Labour Opposition Day debate on funding the teachers' pay rise. On one fabled occasion, a Labour MP invited him to cross the floor. The birth of a disabled child, now 10, in the mid-1980s may also have sown the seeds of a growing interest in social issues, while remaining "dry" on the economy and committed to low inflation. Last year he joined Labour MPs in a Trafalgar Square rally to protest at the Government's rejection of a backbench disabled rights Bill. He had used his first vote to help return Harold Wilson's 1966 Labour administration to power. By the 1974 election, the middle-class Westminster School master, had reverted to type by voting Tory. But by last year he was warning in a newspaper article on the eve of the Tories' Bournemouth conference that they must stop pandering to the "retrogressive" right. In a sign of a future readiness



Changing places: (from left) Mr Howarth at Central Office in 1979, campaigning for disabled rights and arriving at the BBC yesterday for an interview



## The career of a man whose conservative background clashed with his developing moral convictions

Born: 31 June 1934. Father's occupation: Schoolmaster and former liaison officer at Field Marshal Montgomery's HQ. Education: Rugby School and King's College, Cambridge, where, at 22, he voted to return Harold Wilson's Labour Government to power. Graduated in 1955 in history. Family: In 1967, married Gillian.

Children: With whom he has two sons and two daughters. They separated last year. Employment: 1965-7: Served as senior research assistant in Montgomery. He was ghost-writer for Montgomery's book, *History of Warfare*. 1967-74: Assistant master of Westminster School. Voted Conservative for the first time in 1974.

Political career: Conservative Party. Served as private secretary to William Whitelaw and then Lord Thorneycroft. 1979-81: Director of Conservative research department and vice-chairman of party organisation. 1981-83: Elected Conservative MP for Stratford-upon-Avon. 1984-5: Secretary of the

Conservative Party. 1985-7: Private Parliamentary Secretary to Sir Rhodes Boyson. 1988-9: Government whip in 1988, where he was a Lord Commissioner of the Treasury. 1989-92: Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Education and Science. 1992-1995: Altparty Arts and Heritage Group secretary.

Interests: Governor of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, ran the London marathon for disabled charities and is a member of the British dyslexia association. His interests are reading, education, the arts and charities and these are reflected in the several books he has written which include *Changing Chantry* and *Save Our Schools and Arts: The Way Ahead*.

## Disillusion spreads on Tory left

If hard proof is needed of Alan Howarth's deepening misgivings about his own party, look no further than this year's debates on the Jobseekers Bill.

"Are the unemployed to be treated as criminals?" he said of the Jobseekers Allowance. "What will it do to the morale of our society to proceed in this way? ... What will it do to the public service ethos to create arbitrary powers, systematically encourage officials to disqualify from benefit, sanction claimants even more severely than at present?" he asked.

"Is it to appease the consciences of the affluent so that they can feel more comfortable, believing that those who are poor are feckless and fiddling the system?"

No wonder he was under suspicion for months from government whips as likely to jump ship. Trying to engage the Prime Minister in a debate about the Bill was like "spitting in the wind", he told BBC Television's *Breakfast with Frost*, yes-

terday. The upshot of his frustrations could make moves to put "clear water" between an ever more rightwards-leaning Tory Party and Labour even more explosive than before.

Mr Howarth's friends on the "wet" wing of the Tory party had been feeling disillusioned for months. They fear John Major is being drawn closer to the right wing to ensure its support.

No one else was prepared to follow Mr Howarth yesterday, but his departure could signal an intensification in the battle for the soul of the Tory Party, with the centre-left fearing the Tory leadership will revert to a Thatcherite agenda of cuts in the welfare state to pay for tax cuts as a pre-election bribe.

The probability of further defections - perhaps to the Liberal Democrats - remains small. But that is arguably of limited consolation to a Prime Minister who thought he had reun-

ified his party. Drove of sitting Tory MPs are voting embarrassingly with their feet by announcing they will not contest the next election, including thoughtful minds such as former minister George Walcott, the MP for Buckingham.

The fears of a right-wing party coup by Mr Portillo, now Secretary of State for Defence, were eased by the leadership contest, which secured Mr Major's position. The appointment of Michael Heseltine as Deputy Prime Minister appeared to put the left of the party in the ascendancy. But Mr Howarth yesterday described Mr Major's victory as "hollow". "There's a lack of vision, a lack of clear determination as to where the Conservative Party should go."

Another left-of-centre MP said: "It settled Mr Major's position, but the drift to the right is inexorable."

Many on the left, such as Peter Temple-Morris, MP for Leominster, are supporters of

Mr Heseltine, who voted for Mr Major to stop the right-wing challenger, John Redwood.

The defection has raised fresh misgivings about the direction of the party. The Macleod group and the Lollards, run by Mr Temple-Morris, have proved incapable of organising to stop the Thatcherite 92 Group, run by Sir George Gardiner, MP for Reigate, seizing control of most of the backbench committees.

The Tory left tends to be the older generation and are being replaced by Thatcherites, such as Gerald Howarth, who is standing in Aldershot, the seat held by Mr Heseltine's biographer, Julian Critchley.

While the Tory left believes Mr Howarth has gone too far, losing them a standard-bearer, some were predicting a realignment of the Tory Party if John Major loses the next election. Many would refuse to continue in a right-wing Tory party under Mr Portillo. And some are prepared to join the

Liberal Democrats after the election - the leap in Labour would be too great. "The Tory Party is an uncomfortable place for us at the moment. The sooner there is an election the better," one unhappy Tory said.

A degree of unhappiness was undoubtedly the future lot of Mr Howarth. But the sheer inevitability of it all was becoming plain to see. Mr Howarth was the sole Tory MP invited to the February launch of *The State We're In*, the best-selling book by Will Hutton, post-Keynesian guru of left-of-centre economics. Mr Howarth, whose invocations of Burke and Disraeli are legion, grinned when asked what he was doing in the Tory Party. Later, when Mr Portillo was suggesting Britain should leave the International Labour Organisation, he instantly signed up to Labour MP Denis MacShane's *Early Day Motion* deploring the move.

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES and COLIN BROWN

## Few careers survive defection

STEVE BOGGAN

Winston Churchill said it was better to change your mind than be wrong all the time. He was possibly the most famous turncoat of the 20th Century, switching from Tory to Liberal in 1904, and later switching back again.

When he jumped ship to the Liberals, he admitted he had "rattled" on the Conservatives. When he defected back, he famously announced he was "re-rattling".

There have been about 70 defections in the past 60 years, but Alan Howarth is thought to be the first from Conservative to Labour. Defections in the other

direction are rare but not unknown. Reg Prentice defected from Labour, with whom he had served as a Cabinet minister, to the Tories in 1977 and went on to hold office in a Conservative government.

The largest single defection came in 1981 when 27 Labour MPs, led by David Owen and Bill Rodgers, formed the SDP with one Conservative MP, Christopher Brocklebank-Fowler.

Many of the founders discovered that defection spelled a premature end to their political careers - particularly for the leaders. Mr Brocklebank-Fowler was ejected by his Tory constituency at the next gener-

al election and never recovered politically.

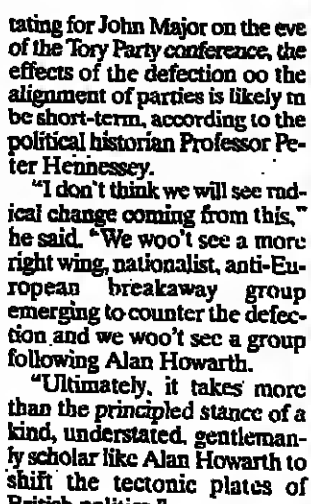
Bruce Douglas-Mann agreed to fight a by-election as an SDP candidate but lost to the Conservatives in June 1982.

Only a few defections - like Churchill - have ridden the political rollercoaster with aplomb. John Horam, one of the original defectors from Labour to the SDP, had served as a transport minister in James Callaghan's Cabinet. He left his SDP seat in 1983, surfaced again as a Tory supporter in 1987 and won the safe seat of Orpington in 1992. Last March he was made Public Service and Science minister.

Although politically devastating for John Major on the eve of the Tory Party conference, the effects of the defection on the alignment of parties is likely to be short-term, according to the political historian Professor Peter Hennessy.

"I don't think we will see radical change coming from this," he said. "We won't see a more right wing, nationalist, anti-European breakaway group emerging to counter the defection and we won't see a group following Alan Howarth."

"Ultimately, it takes more than the principled stance of a kind, understated, gentlemanly scholar like Alan Howarth to shift the tectonic plates of British politics."



Churchill: 'Rattled' from the Tories and 're-rattled' back



## HOWARTH DEFLECTION

Talk of a Tory town: Constituents astonished and bemused as MP's decision sends shock waves through the heart of England

# High drama played out in home of the Bard



MATTHEW BRACE

False face must hide what the false heart doth know - Macbeth

Behind drawn curtains at the Conservative Association headquarters in the home of Shakespeare yesterday the latest act in a weekend of high drama was being played out.

Angry and shocked, the association's executive met in emergency session to discuss the defection of the MP, Alan Howarth, to the Labour Party. Only after the meeting had broken up were the drapes pulled back to reveal, in one front room, a portrait of that other famous floor-crosser, Sir Winston Churchill.

The irony may have been lost on Doo Rushton, the local party chairman, who read a prepared statement: "We are disappointed that Alan has decided to leave the Conservative Party. We are astonished that... a former government minister has chosen to join the Labour Party when only a short time ago he had been so fervent in his support for John Major."

Telephone lines had been busy, he said, with calls of anger and disbelief at Mr Howarth's actions, and of support for the Conservative Party.

Debate among Stratfordians was already raging. Locals were calling for his immediate resignation on the grounds that he

should not continue as a Labour MP for an overwhelmingly Conservative seat.

In the town's pubs, the content and quality of the previous day's political performance was discussed. The lead character was variously described as "brave", "principled" and "a scoundrel who let down all those who voted for him".

However, the townsfolk agreed it was the most exciting thing to happen in their corner of England since the Sixties scandal over John Profumo, a former Tory member for Stratford. Only the tourists, maps in hand, failed to raise an eyebrow at the mention of the Government's latest political upset.

Across from the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, the long bar of the Dirty Duck pub was alive with chatter, and two streets away in the Vintner Wine Bar, the young staff seemed pleased, if not a little perplexed, about their town's new political status.

Verity Spencer, a 22-year-old waitress, said: "I've grown up in a Tory environment, in a Tory family," she said. "I've heard what it was like when Labour was in - with all the strikes - that information has an effect on you. Now we have a Labour MP, it has made me think, 'Well, let's have a real look at what all the parties mean.'"

Elsewhere, Peter Jones, a retired Anglican clergyman from Stratford-on-Avon, said he voted Conservative in the last



Bemused: The quiet constituency of Stratford (above). Top left: The local Tory chairman Don Rushton waves a response to Alan Howarth's letter

Photograph: Philip Meech

election and would never consider switching his allegiance to Labour. He said of Mr Howarth's defection: "I think it is a foolish move... I don't think people will support him just for crossing over to the other side of the House. I don't think he has given his party the chance to make clear its policies and he hasn't even waited for the autumn budget."

Others saw Mr Howarth's step as courageous. Andrew Smith, a shop worker in the town, said: "I think it was right of Mr Howarth to do what he

felt was correct. I voted Tory last time but not again. I think many Conservative voters will be affected by this."

John Vereker, the leader of the Conservative group on the county council, said he understood Mr Howarth's disillusionment with the Conservative Party but was upset not to see him try to change it from within. He said: "Quite clearly it is for Alan to make his own decisions based on what his conscience tells him. For my own personal point of view, I believe he could have achieved more

from within the party than by doing this."

Stratford's Labour co-opted spent the day holed up in a temporary press office. Its branch secretary Ann Grosvenor said that despite the radical move, Mr Howarth might not be quite as many friends as people were suggesting. "Our membership has more than doubled over the past year and I can tell you he would take some voters with him if he did stand as our candidate in Stratford," she said.

However, she added that the likelihood of his name being on the voting sheet at the next General Election was slim. "Our final meeting to decide on a candidate is on October 24, so I don't think he really has a chance. And I think we would want him to have some sort of probationary period," she said.

Away from the political murmur of his shocked constituents in Stratford, Mr Howarth spent the afternoon at his Cotswold stone farmhouse in the village of Lower Tysoe, on the southern fringes of his large constituency. Admiring the apple

trees in his front garden, he said he had no doubt he had made the right decision. "I feel a profound release and an exhilaration," he said.

Mr Howarth said he had many misgivings about Tory policy, but it was the stirring atmosphere of the Labour Party Conference in Brighton last week which finally made him switch allegiance.

Bidding farewell to the media yesterday afternoon, he urged them to indulge in the fruits of his labour. "Help yourself to an apple on your way out. I recommend the tree by the gate, they're the best." Little Joyce then breathed a sigh of relief and continued its peaceful Sunday afternoon.

A few doors down from Mr Howarth's house, a farmer stood smiling in his vegetable patch from where he had been watching the day's events.

"Seen it all before," he said. "We had Thatcher up here once to see him. Helicopters and police everywhere. None of it really means anything in the long run. Life just goes on, doesn't it?"

## That letter: a 10-point response

John Redwood, the right-wing former Cabinet minister defeated by John Major in a leadership battle, challenges Alan Howarth's reasons for defecting

FROM: ALAN HOWARTH, C.B.E., M.P.  
HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON, S.W.1  
7 October 1995

D.F.M. Rushton Esq.  
Chairman of the Stratford-on-Avon Conservative Association  
3 Titbury Street  
Stratford upon Avon  
CV37 6BE

Dear Don,

We talked today, and I was writing to you formally as Chairman of the Stratford-on-Avon Conservative Party to tell you that I have decided to join the Labour Party. It is my intention to stand for the House of Commons and sit, as Member of Parliament for Stratford-on-Avon, on the Labour benches.

You, and members of the Association, have been aware of my scepticism about development in the Conservative Party, and of my profound disagreement with a range of its policies, so I do not think you will find this decision entirely surprising.

The Labour Party, after the reforms and the renewal it has gone through, embodies the values and purposes which I personally hold to be right. For the first time in my lifetime we have in Britain a party which is both deeply committed to social justice and vigorously clear-sighted about the realities of government.

As you know, during the three years since I came out of the Government I have argued that the Conservative Party should return to the "free market" condition. The party has moved the other way. Rather than lead the division in our society the Conservative Party seems intent on deepening them. The poor to Britain have not shared in the growth of the nation's wealth, and are more likely to find the impact of inflation or even a modest rise in the cost of living. Benefits have been cut for the unemployed and the sick and the disabled at the same time as their National Insurance contributions have been increased. The Conservative Party is championing the tax cut for the comfortably off while workers are being asked to make sacrifices and to work longer hours in a wholly unacceptable way in the Party. The Government sets its face against any constitutional change which would curtail its monopoly of executive power. There is no acceptance of power and a business within the Government which is damaging to our democracy and to the quality of relationships in our society.

By contrast the Labour Party has a central commitment to policies which would provide real practical help to the long-term unemployed, single mothers and others who are disadvantaged. Labour consistently puts education at the top of its agenda.

Labour is unequivocal in its condemnation of prejudice and discrimination. Labour is committed to constitutional reform. Introducing these policies is an issue of national importance - a commitment to the integrity of our society - for which the country longs.

On issues other than I have found myself in agreement with Labour, and I have concluded that I should join the Labour Party. An MP's first obligation is to the well-being of his constituents. It is his duty to speak and vote as he believes in the best interests of the communities he represents. As a Labour MP I would be able to do so.

What is painful, and I very much regret, is to part company politically from you and other friends and colleagues in the Conservative Party in the constituency. Although I have had vigorous debates with some of our members, they have been remarkably tolerant, and many of them have been extremely supportive. I am sorry to upset people I like and respect. I hope that personal friendship can transcend and survive political differences.

I would be grateful if you would convey this letter to the Officers and Branch Chairmen of the Association.

Yours sincerely  
Alan Howarth

1 It is one thing to argue for new or Conservative policies from the back benches: quite another to tear up most of what you have stood for over 12 years as a Conservative MP and join our opponents. Stratford Conservatives are bound to be shocked by this decision.

2 You and I always used to agree that a job is the best welfare policy: that everyone should have the chance of a good education and the opportunity to own a stake in the country. You never used to argue for Labour policies to replace ours around the No. 10 Downing Street table. The average income of pensioners has gone up by 50 per cent more than prices since 1979.

3 We need tax cuts, because tax bears too heavily on those who wish to work and to support their families. I will miss being able to debate this with you at Blackpool. Tax cuts are part of a good welfare policy: to help people back to work and to meet the costs of their families.

4 Labour's policy proposes a modest increase in Conservative job schemes, whilst threatening hundreds of thousands in low-paid employment by the Social Chapter and the minimum wage. Far from bringing higher living standards, even John Prescott has conceded this will increase unemployment.

5 Labour's commitment to constitutional reform means a certain tax in Scotland and more bureaucracy wherever there is regional government. Do you really think a regional parliament for the Midlands would improve life in Stratford?

2 This means that during your time as Head of the Conservative Research Department, as MP and as a Minister you were always unhappy with your party's stance. How could you live a lie for so long?

4 Benefits for the disabled have gone up substantially, and the numbers receiving them have increased. This year over £20,000 million will be spent compared with £8,420 million at the end of the last decade, 1989-90.

5 The Government believes individuals and families deserve more choice and more say in public services. You yourself used to be keen on parental choice of school and Grant Maintained Schools. Conservatives have reduced State power over industry and commerce by a huge privatisation programme and have given many the opportunity to own their home. Your new party opposed all these ways of bringing power to the people. You used to support this.

6 There is little convincing in Labour's attitude to education. Labour is in power in many education authorities, yet often fails to pass on 80 per cent or more of the education money sent to them by Parliament. Tony Blair says they should do so, but has not succeeded in making them do the decent thing. Labour authorities all too often leave problem schools in their areas without the leadership they need to raise standards.

10 The people of Stratford, who voted for a Conservative MP by large majority, would probably disagree. Conservative members might think instead of their MP in those lines of Coriolanus: "Like a dull actor now, I forgot my part, and I am out, Even to full disgrace!"

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## news

# MoD up in arms over sponsor plan

CHRIS BLACKHURST

British Aerospace, GEC and other defence suppliers could soon have their own "sponsored" units in the armed forces under plans currently being discussed in Whitehall.

The concept of a "Sponsored Reserve", where contractors lend employees to the Ministry of Defence in time of emergency to help service and maintain equipment, was first raised by Malcolm Rifkind when he was Defence Secretary and is now being considered by his successor Michael Portillo. A Reserve Forces Bill is expected to be included in the forthcoming Queen's Speech.

However, sponsorship and other measures mooted for the reserve are meeting with stiff resistance in some quarters of the MoD. Under the new sponsorship scheme, as part of a contract to supply equipment, the manufacturer would agree also to provide the staff to service the

equipment. Such personnel would receive some military training, although they would not be required to take part in front-line fighting.

But some in the MoD regard this hi-tech civilian force as another example of privatisation creeping into the military. They fear for the engineers, mechanics and other regulars whose jobs could be under threat from civilians seconded from companies eager to win orders.

Another proposal which Ministry critics fear is designed to obscure shortfalls in the regular forces is the widening of call-out rules for reservists to cover peace-keeping humanitarian and disaster relief operations. At the same time, those with specialist expertise - linguists, medics and technicians - will be encouraged to join a new High Readiness Reserve, which officials admit has been conceived as a stop-gap for skills shortages in the regular forces. Members of the HRR

could be required to serve at any time, for up to nine months. "Who, if they are any good, can just take nine months off? What we will get will be the free-lancing, self-financing adventurers or back-room people - just the sort we do not want," said one regular officer.

Mr Portillo is also planning to make it easier for reservists to serve with the regular forces for a set period. This too is being viewed with scepticism, as a charter for the unemployed to become soldiers. However, it is understood that Mr Portillo will leave alone the powerful local reserve associations, headed by retired military top brass, which act as a buffer between the MoD and reserve units.

Labour is preparing for battle, believing the reserve is being used as a smoke screen for failings in the regular forces. David Clark MP, shadow defence spokesman, said: "We want a properly resourced armed forces, not a part-time



Return of the native: Nobel Literature laureate Seamus Heaney meeting the Irish President Mary Robinson in Dublin. Photograph: Eamonn Farrell

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## IN BRIEF

## Boy dies in fall from father's tanker

A six-year-old boy died after falling from a milk tanker being driven by his father. The child went under the vehicle at a junction of the A46 by-pass on the outskirts of Lincoln yesterday morning.

The tanker was owned by G Easton and Son Ltd, of Alford and Lincoln. The company's transport manager, Andrew Easton, said last night: "We are all very sad about the news. The last I heard from the police, the driver was down at the police station and they are asking to have the vehicle inspected."

## Britons shot in Moroccan hotel attack

Police in Morocco were hunting for an off-duty policeman, Mustapha Hamouch, 37, who shot dead two Britons, Martin and Margaret Gower, of Ruislip, Middlesex, in a hotel in Tangiers. Also injured in the random attack were Patricia Sharratt, who suffered back wounds and was flown back to Britain last night, and Charlene Barker, 12, of Bradwell, Norfolk, who had hand injuries.

## Fox-hunting clash

A British Field Sports Society official has been charged with a public order offence. Alistair Jackson, a former master of the Catstock Foxhunt and southeast spokesman for the BFFS, was arrested in Yeovil, Somerset, after allegedly punching a hunt saboteur. He will appear before Yeovil magistrates on 20 November.

## Windsurfing fatality

A 55-year-old windsurfer died on Lake Bala, North Wales, despite a tempest by onlookers to bring him ashore and revive him. Police said the man was from Llandudno, Gwynedd.

## Lord Habgood rebukes media

Lord Habgood, former Archbishop of York, in the Priestland Memorial Lecture on BBC Radio 4, accused the media of using snap comments and flip dismissals to perpetuate "a culture of contempt".

## National Lottery draw

Three tickets shared the £9.2m jackpot in Saturday's lottery draw. The winning numbers were: 28, 37, 10, 30, 36, 22; the bonus, 43.

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Patty Loveless

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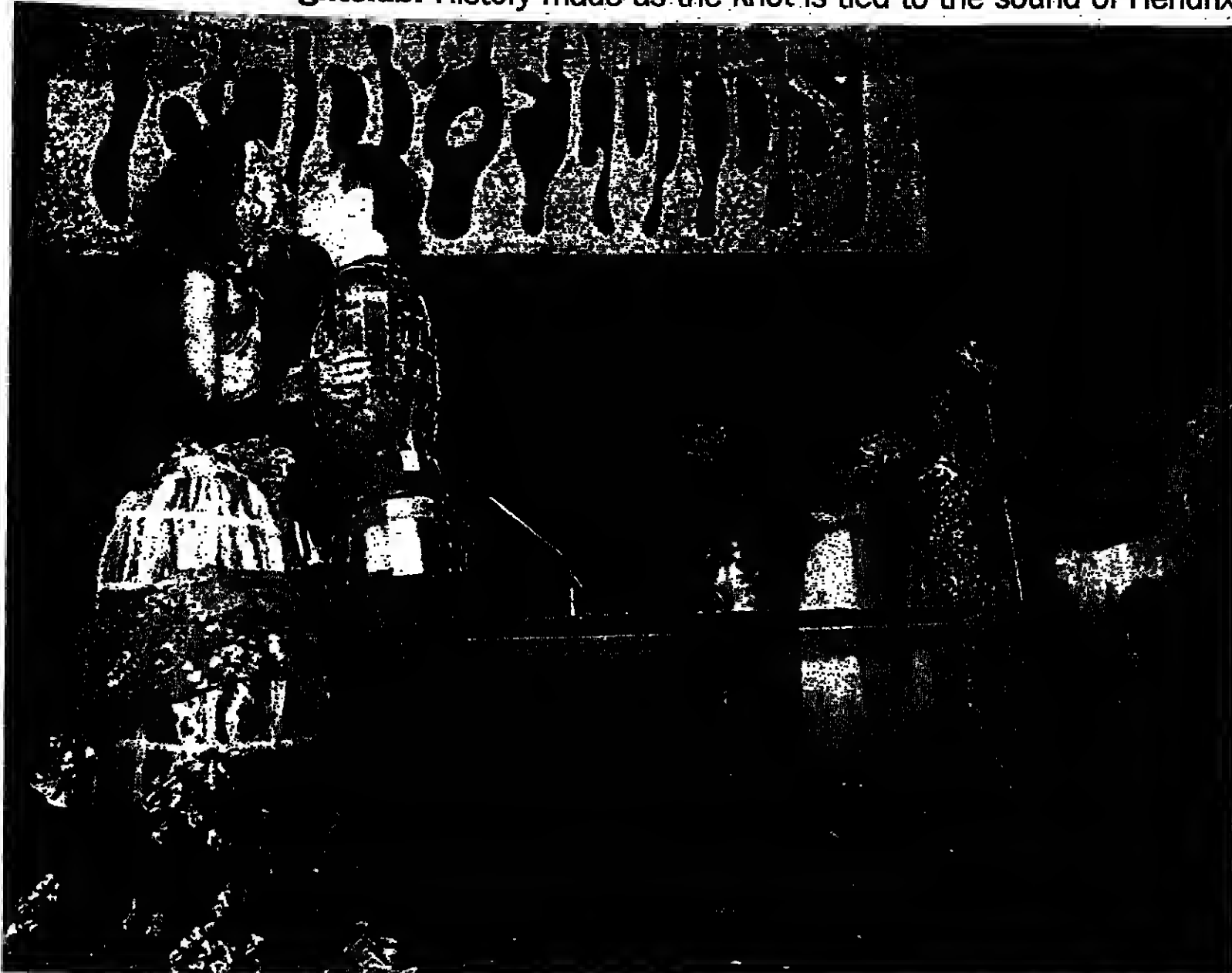
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COLUMBIA



## Wedding in the nightclub: History made as the knot is tied to the sound of Hendrix



Club wed: Alison David and Todd Faith during their wedding service at the Hacienda club

Photograph: Craig Easton

## Couple rock to marriage made in the Hacienda

DECCA AITKENHEAD

A couple made marital history yesterday, as the first pair to wed in a British night club, Manchester's Hacienda club hosted the ceremony, followed by a twelve-hour extravaganza of installation art, alternative music and live performances which included the groom's own "Body Fluids" safe sex show.

Alison David, 22, a singer from London, married Manchester video director Todd Faith, 35, on stage before an audience of 1,500 friends and relatives to the strains of Here Comes The Bride, played on Jimmy Hendrix-style rock guitar and flanked by a best man wearing a white loin cloth and wings. The couple exchanged vows using microphones. The bride wore a swirling hooped and hologrammed dress of love hearts, the groom, a medieval outfit.

The couple's mothers then

appeared on stage and the four sang vows written by the newlyweds. An altar was provided and Alison's mother, a reverend, gave a blessing. An organist had been booked but was forbidden to play at the night club by his church.

An eclectic marathon of entertainments ensued. The bride and her band, Life's Addiction, performed, and followed by Todd's Aids awareness show, for which volunteers came forward to dress as condoms.

A fashion show, a tea dance, a jazz quintet, poetry readings, films and other live bands followed. It was the first wedding to be given a club logo - Love Live 95.

The worlds of fashion and music were well represented among the guests. Dress code for men ranged from morning suits to glittering dresses, while babes in arms mingled with face painted New Agers. Film crews and photographers from

style and fashion magazines were present.

Despite the highly modern nature of the occasion, the bride said the couple's motives were entirely traditional. "A wedding signifies, to me, romance and love and a belief in commitment to a relationship. It doesn't signify a ball and chain - it's simply the most romantic thing you could ever do."

The wedding followed last April's change in the law, which allowed anyone to apply for a licence to host a civil marriage ceremony. The new law stipulates that the premises must be duly dignified and not detract from the solemnity of marriage. To date, 700 new venues have been licensed, including Granada TV studios and Aston Villa FC.

"Some authorities do appear to have taken a liberal interpretation of the guidelines," commented the Office of Census and Population Studies.

## Fascists plan to wreck England's night in Oslo

JASON BENNETT  
Crime Correspondent

The extreme right-wing group, Combat 18, is planning violent disruptions during England's football match against Norway on Wednesday, according to an internal newsletter.

Wednesday night's game will be the first international England have played on foreign soil since rioting stopped their match earlier this year against the Irish Republic in Dublin. Combat 18 were believed to have been responsible for orchestrating much of the violence in Dublin, including making fascist salutes, shouting anti-IRA slogans and hurling missiles. The rioting in February resulted in the arrest of 41 English supporters and three Irish fans. About 40 people were injured.

The British authorities and the Football Association are desperate to avoid any repetition of the mayhem in Ireland that led to fighting on the streets, particularly in the run-up to European Championships in England next year.

However, *Searchlight*, the anti-fascist magazine, has seen a news bulletin published by Combat 18, in which the or-

ganisation boasts it is going to the game in Oslo for more violence. The high level of policing and intelligence, combined with the expense of getting to Norway, makes it likely that if any trouble does flare up it will happen outside the stadium, probably in bars and clubs.

They Robson, a researcher at *Searchlight*, said: "Combat have made it clear they want to do something that will hit the headlines. They enjoyed the publicity over Dublin and want to do it again and cause a major disturbance."

"It will be much harder in Norway because the police are taking it very seriously. It's more likely to be a drunken rampage with violence before or after the match rather than in the stadium."

He added: "We suspect a lot of them are already over there to avoid being spotted by the police who will be checking people at the ports and airports."

Officers from the football intelligence unit at the National Criminal Intelligence Service have been working closely with the Norwegian authorities and have provided them with information about known hooligans.

They have predicted that up

to 250 people without tickets will travel to Norway, many of whom are expected to be looking for trouble. The Football Association still has some of its allocated 500 tickets available, although convicted hooligans are banned from buying them. NCIS will provide "spotters" who will mingle with the English supporters to help identify known thugs. Norway will refuse entry to any convicted "supporters" and have vowed to prosecute troublemakers.

A spokeswoman for NCIS said the football intelligence officers did not have any evidence to suggest Combat 18 or any formal organisation was preparing to go to Norway. In the past NCIS has argued that groups of hooligans were often aligned to specific football clubs rather than political organisations.

She said: "There's always a risk when England are playing away. There could be trouble, but because so few are likely to go to the match and with the co-operation of the Norwegian police, we believe it is unlikely we shall see serious disturbances."

She said NCIS had received reports of people from British right wing groups linking up with Danish counterparts.

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## news



Seeing spots: Sheer chiffon leopard-print hooded kaftan from Dolce & Gabbana's 1996 collection (left) and an Instante swim-suit, modelled by Naomi Campbell, at the Milan fashion shows



Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

## Blood service crisis as staff exodus bites

LOUISE JURY

The threat of closure hanging over a third of Britain's blood transfusion centres has caused a massive exodus of qualified staff, bringing the service close to breaking point.

The Independent has discovered that Lancaster has lost three-fifths of its qualified personnel, Liverpool one-third - including a senior scientific officer, who left for a job in Switzerland - and Brentwood in Essex two-fifths of staff, since the closure proposals were announced. Attracting qualified replacements is proving difficult.

While all the staff emphasised that professional pride ensured blood was safe, many claimed the system was "showing signs of stress".

The findings emerge as the National Blood Authority came under fire yesterday for exporting factor eight, a vital

blood by-product, despite fears that making money from donors might jeopardise their good will.

Radical reforms to the blood transfusion service were recommended in September last year in an independent consultants' report aimed at trimming £10m from its £135m annual budget.

After consultation, the National Blood Authority, which runs the service, handed proposals to the Government suggesting closing a third of the 15 regional centres.

But a decision has been continually delayed amid a series of embarrassments including the faulty Tuba bag scandal and a row over proposed sponsorship by Ribena and McVitie's. Staff claim the uncertainty has created a form of "planner's blight". One insider said: "Unless all your staff have sufficient knowledge, there must be a risk

of the systems falling apart. Unqualified staff have to work mechanically. Things are beginning to slow down."

John Simmons, of the union Manufacturing Science Finance, said: "The problems are all over the country. They're having difficulties in Leeds and recruitment in Newcastle is pretty grim. Southampton and Cambridge are similar." Yet closure would save comparatively little money, he claimed. The bulk of the annual budget goes on blood collection, not the centres' work of testing and processing.

At Lancaster, a special quality audit was undertaken on Thursday and Friday because of fears over the impact of the exodus of about 25 out of 40 staff. A senior scientist, Ivor Thompson, said: "Everything is more difficult because we've got less experienced people who require more supervision. People

are pulling out all the stops to try to keep things running safely."

Andy Ford, the MSF representative in Liverpool, said: "It's just on the edge of a very severe crisis." He claimed only high unemployment in the city enabled them to attract graduates as replacement staff, but they needed two years to train.

Oxford lost its quality assurance manager in February. He was not replaced due to an embargo on recruiting senior staff. In Brentwood, Essex, a laboratory worker said: "The qualified staff are working too fast and the new people miss things. It is not endangering patients, but it's impairing efficiency."

A National Blood Authority spokesman denied there was a national problem. "The number of staff leaving has increased but we're seeking to make sure that the service and the product is not affected by that."

## Justice at last for murdered Briton's family

Phil Davison reports on the long path to convicting a millionaire's killers

The millionaire British businessman Howard Bates came to Miami on 6 February, 1991, to sack Maggie Carr, the young chief accountant of the American surgical supplies company he financed. He had discovered that around \$1m of the money he invested had gone missing.

Mr Bates, a 43-year-old former RAF pilot and father of three, arrived at the north-west Miami headquarters of Bolden Products straight from Miami International Airport but was lured to a dark office by the then 27-year-old Carr and the company's chairman, Albert Lucio. There he was gunned down by Carr's former lover, Wayne Merced, while the other two looked on.

After more than four and a half years of investigation, trials and one mistrial, Carr, now 31, was finally convicted of first degree murder by a Miami court at the weekend and automatically sentenced to life imprisonment. Under local law, she will serve 25 years before parole is even considered.

Prosecutors in Florida's Dade County, where a jury convicted Carr, described her as "Bonnie" to Lucio's "Clyde", in the light of the cold-blooded way they organised the killing. However, unlike the historical gangsters, they were not lovers, although Carr and Merced, the man who pulled the trigger, had been once.

Merced, a 28-year-old gas repair man, now serving 45 years in jail after handing himself in, told the county court he had killed Mr Bates on Carr's behalf because he had been "in a galling mood." He had hoped to win back the woman who had called off their wedding, describing him as a "ditch digger" who couldn't satisfy her sexual needs. Lucio, serving 40 years, did not testify at Carr's trial.

Mr Bates's disappearance remained a mystery for two years until Merced came forward. He claimed his coo-



Shot dead: Howard Bates was silenced by embezzlers

science was troubling him but may have had an eye on avoiding the death penalty by collaborating against Carr and Lucio. The latter had been chairman of the surgical supplies company, Bolden Products, in which Mr Bates was the chief investor. Together, Carr and Lucio had embezzled close to \$3m from their backers.

When Carr first got wind of Mr Bates's suspicions, she sent Lucio to kill him in England before Christmas 1990. She sent a .357 Magnum pistol, disguised in a large package of hair dryers, to Lucio at the Heathrow Sheraton hotel.

When Lucio went to Mr Bates's home, the businessman wasn't in and he lost his nerve. A maid at the Sheraton discovered the pistol and 49 bullets hidden in his room.

On February 6, Lucio and Carr lured Mr Bates to an unlit office at Bolden Products, where Merced crouched in a corner. Merced shot the Mr Bates with a 9mm pistol and wanted to leave but, according to his testimony, Carr told him: "He's alive and suffering. You're going to have to shoot him again." Merced did so before helping Lucio dispose of the body.

## Atlantic invaders thrill birdwatchers

A mini-invasion of American migrants in Britain and Ireland provided the main thrills as thousands of ornithological enthusiasts celebrated World Birdwatch yesterday.

England's top spot for ocean-crossing arrivals was on the Isles of Scilly, with a yellow-rumped warbler and a red-eyed vireo spotted on Treco Island, and another red-eyed vireo on St Mary's. Vireos have also been reported at Hook Head, Ireland. A white-rumped sandpiper, also blown off course while migrating from North to South America for the winter, was seen in Wexford. Monarch butterflies, too, rode the gales over the Atlantic, and were seen on the Isles of Scilly, and in Cornwall and Dorset.

But not all feathered attractions were American. In Scotland, bird-watchers travelled north of Aberdeen to see a bee-eater from southern Europe. A million bird-watchers world-wide turned out over the weekend to celebrate an increasingly popular pastime, and to back environment-boosting

campaigns. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, with almost 900,000 members, staged more than 140 promotional sessions in the UK, and BirdLife International united conservation groups with bird-watchers in more than 80 countries, many of which are facing threats to wildlife habitats.

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“DRAIN COVERS  
AND POTHOLES HAVE  
RARELY BEEN SO  
INCONSEQUENTIAL  
IN THIS CLASS, NOR  
MOTORWAYS SO  
FLAT-IRON SMOOTH.”

(AUTOCAR, AUG 95)





## news

## Scientists await the call to Nobel super-stardom

STEVE CONNOR and TOM WILKIE

Shortly before 10.30 this morning, Professor Nils Ringertz of the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm will pick up the telephone to tell one of the world's leading scientists that he or she has won the 1995 Nobel Prize for Medicine.

For the winner (the prize can actually be shared among up to three researchers), the award means scientific super-stardom. The mystique of the prize is such that the winners' words and opinions are widely reported and carry weight even on topics far removed from their scientific competence.

Today's announcement will be followed on Wednesday when the Swedish Academy of Sciences reveals the chemistry and the physics awards. This year each prize is worth seven million Swedish krona (£1m).

The scientific Nobels have largely escaped the controversy which the literature prize sometimes attracts. According to Professor Sten Grillner, of the Karolinska's Nobel Assembly, "we are very glad. It has not happened because we have a long process. Each year the Assembly sends out to 3,000 researchers an offer to nominate candidates for the prize."

The request for nominations goes to learned societies, such as the US National Academy of Sciences and Britain's Royal Society, and on a two-yearly rotating basis to large universities such as Oxford, Harvard and Stanford, as well as less well-known ones on a longer cycle. "About 250 to 300 nominate every year," Prof Grillner said, and the nominations arrive at

the end of January. "Many can immediately be seen not to be a very likely candidate."

The serious candidates are scrutinised by 15 professors from the Karolinska who write and commission detailed reports on each, before making a single recommendation to the Nobel Assembly, consisting of 50 out of the Karolinska's 150 professors. The whole process is exhaustive and obsessively secret. Even though the recommendation was decided before the end of last week, no hints emerge beforehand.

The fame of winning a Nobel prize stays with scientists for the rest of their career – often longer than the financial reward that goes with it.

Sir Aaron Klug, director of the Laboratory of Molecular Medicine at Cambridge and joint Nobel chemistry prize winner in 1982, said the prize is the greatest accolade scientists can receive from their peers. "Other than that it didn't change my life at all that much." He said his prize of about £80,000 paid for "a new bicycle, among other things".

Sir John Vane, the pharmacologist at the William Harvey Research Institute in London, won his medicine Nobel in 1982 for his work on prostaglandins, natural chemicals in the body involved in pain response. Among the personal benefits of the prize, he said, is being able to get into restaurants "even if they are short of space". In addition, the prize raises the public's awareness of scientific achievements although a drawback is that "for every Nobel prize winner there are dozens of losers who should have got it in other fields".



Express delivery: A fitter working in Burton on Trent, Staffordshire, on a driving wheel – the initial stage of building the first main-line express steam locomotive for 35 years. The train, 'Tornado', will be completed by 1998 at Darlington and will operate passenger charter services between London and Edinburgh. Photograph: Roger Bamber

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IT SAYS YOU'VE ARRIVED

## School standards 'put at risk by price war'

FRAN ABRAMS and JUDITH JUDD

A price war has broken out between rival groups of private and public sector secondary school inspectors, forcing down fees to a point where both sides say quality is being threatened.

Private firms which now bid for contracts against local authorities and universities say they may be forced to pull out because they can no longer make a profit and maintain standards.

Local authorities claim they have anecdotal evidence that some private inspectors have failed to spot bad schools. The average cost of a secondary school inspection is down from between £22,000 and £25,000 two years ago to between £16,500 and £17,500 today.

The Government introduced four-yearly privatised inspections three years ago under the supervision of the Office for Standards in Education, Ofsted. While officials are struggling to find enough inspectors for the 21,000 primary schools, the market for secondary school inspections is buoyant, with as many as 14 operators competing to inspect some schools.

Local authority teams now account for about 45 per cent of all secondary inspections compared with 78 per cent in 1993, with the rest being covered by private operators.

However, some private operators say they may have to pull out of inspections if the price war continues. Others are happy to make a loss on inspections because they raise their credibility in the education world.

And groups with retired members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of schools, now abolished, are able to charge lower prices than their rivals.

A few university departments which have lost teacher training work because of the Government's introduction of school-based training schemes are also entering the market.

Some local authority teams are using part of the money they make on primary inspection to subsidise secondary work. Unlike universities and private operators, they are legally bound to do inspections at no more or less than cost price.

Private operators are becoming increasingly frustrated because they cannot win contracts to inspect secondary schools at a price which allows them to do the job properly.

Neil McIntosh, chief executive of CfBT Education Services of Reading, one of the biggest private operators, said its policy of maintaining proper training and quality control programmes cost money. "I don't believe that it is possible for organisations, whether public or private, to make a reasonable margin on conducting secondary inspections at the current prices."

Alan Parker, education officer for the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, said: "We have anecdotal evidence that private inspectors are failing to identify schools that the local authority knows are at risk."

But Ofsted dismissed the idea that the rigour of inspections was threatened. "We monitor quality very carefully so teams have to maintain it if they are to continue getting work."

## DAILY POEM

## Personal Column

By Connie Bensley

*Married man would like to meet girl, affectionate, petite, for afternoon diversion.*

*Vicar sighs. He'd like to meet married man, lightening to cheat: he hopes for a conversion.*

*Jane writes off from school to meet married man. He sounds so sweet she longs for the excursion.*

*Blackmailer would like to meet married man, to make discreet enquiries re perversion.*

*Now his wife would like to meet man – her eyes are cold as steel – she writes: I am a blonde, petite, and spilling for diversion.*

Thursday sees the publication, on National Poetry Day, of the fourth Forward Book of Poetry and the announcement of this year's Forward Poetry prizes. The anthology includes poems shortlisted for the three prizes, but also individual poems submitted by publishers, small presses and little magazines. In this section are to be found the work of Rita Dove, Selima Hill, Michael Hofmann, Mimi Khalvati, James Lasdun and Connie Bensley, amongst others. Proceeds from the sale of the book go to the Forward Poetry Trust, which administers the National Poetry Day.

## Half of workforce 'depressed by stress'

Half the country's workforce are depressed because they feel they are under increased stress in their jobs, a survey is to reveal today.

One in three people are working longer hours than they want to and half are not getting overtime pay for their extra hours, the survey says.

The study by the pollster NOP for Granada TV's *World in Action* says that the stresses caused by an increase in hours and the fear of unemployment are costing the country billions of pounds a year.

Professor Cary Cooper, an occupational psychologist, says on the programme, broadcast tonight: "It is a time bomb in our society and we are going to pay the cost."

Professor Cooper was the author of a booklet on stress controversially used by the Department of Health this week. The department said recent research disputed the link between heart attacks and longer working hours.

Professor Cooper, from the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, says on the programme that the stress problem is moving from the shop floor into white collar professions.

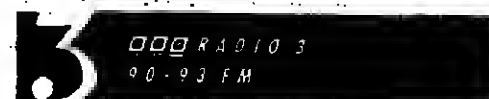
"The bill last year to the UK economy was £11bn due to sickness absence alone, of which we'll say conservatively that a third is stress related, he says.

The survey, of 1,003 full-time workers, says that 63 per cent felt they were under more stress at work than five years ago. As a result 44 per cent said they had trouble sleeping, 26 per cent drank more because of work and 22 per cent smoked more.

Sixty per cent said they were exhausted at the end of the working day and 56 per cent said they did not have enough time for family or personal relationships. Almost a third expected the stress level to rise in the next two years, while 58 per cent said fear of losing their jobs was the reason for working harder.

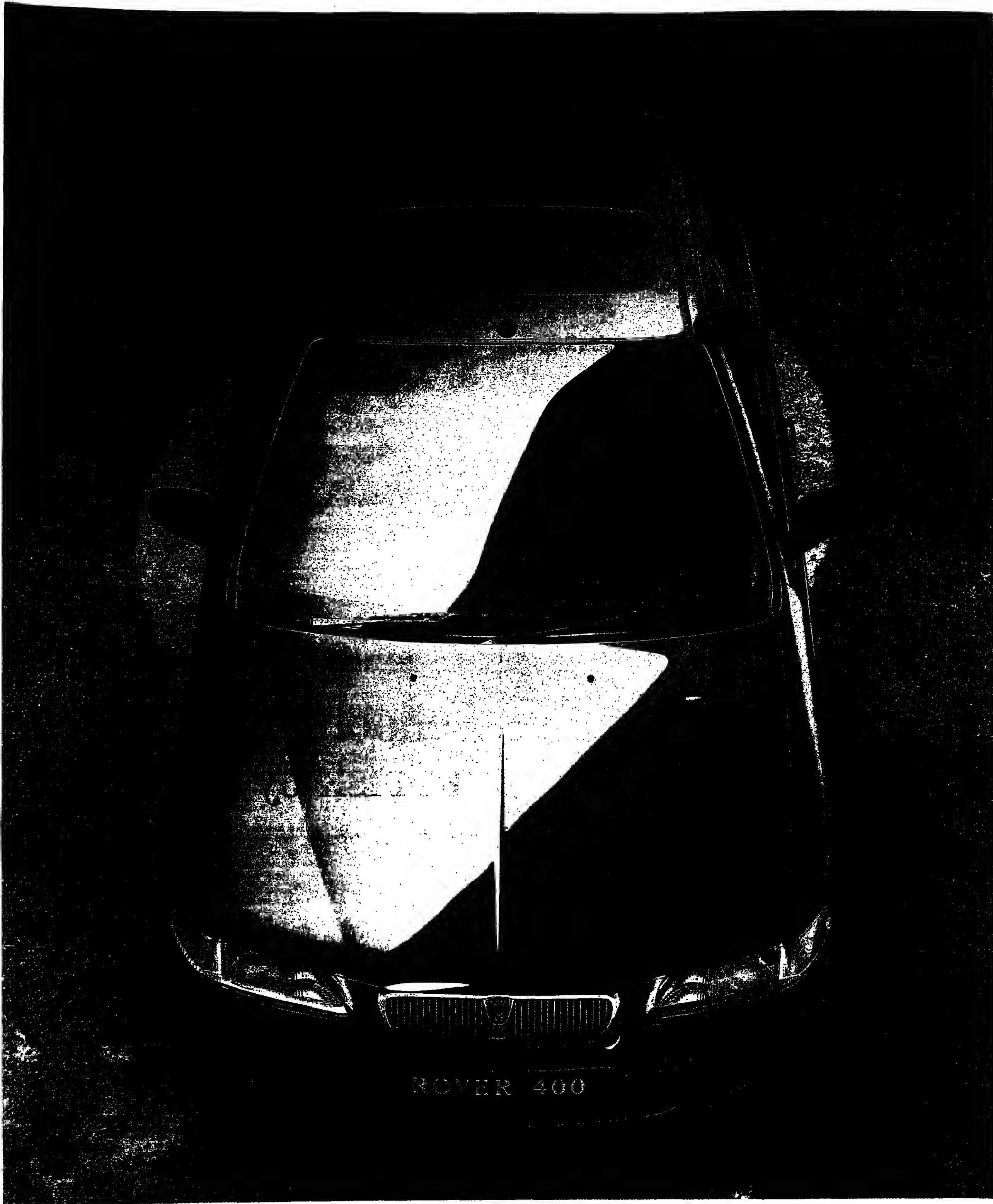
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## news

# Top lawyer offers to work three days a year for free

STEPHEN WARD  
Legal Affairs Correspondent

Stung by Tony Blair's plea to lawyers to serve society by working unpaid, one of the highest-paid QCs is promising to give three days a year free.

Peter Goldsmith QC, who was estimated in a survey among the profession to earn between £750,000 and £1m a year, called on his highly-paid colleagues to follow his example. He said he was open to offers for the best use of his three days, which work out at about £3,500 each.

His suggestion was a response to a call from the Labour leader, a qualified barrister, at last week's conference in Brighton. Tony Blair's wife, Cherie Booth QC, already does some *pro bono* work and the Labour front-bench spokesman Paul Boateng, a qualified barrister and solicitor, also gives some of his time free.

Mr Goldsmith said *pro bono* work should not be a substitute for adequate legal aid, adding that many barristers and solicitors already worked for free.

Mr Goldsmith, a commercial law expert, made the offer during a debate at the solicitors' annual conference in Birmingham over the weekend. He suggested that even civil law specialists could do useful work by fighting complex test cases where the litigant could not otherwise afford to go to court, or giving free counsel's opinions.

The conference was told that a few hundred solicitors may be earning less than £10,000 a year. Most of those on low salaries are high street solicitors working alone, who are still relying on conveyancing work, where prices have been squeezed by the property recession and competition from licensed conveyancers.

The Law Society's new president, Martin Mears, is trying to find ways to enforce fixed conveyancing fees at a higher level and to restrict numbers entering the profession to reduce competition.

The Law Society's research and policy adviser, John Jenkins, revealed the findings of a

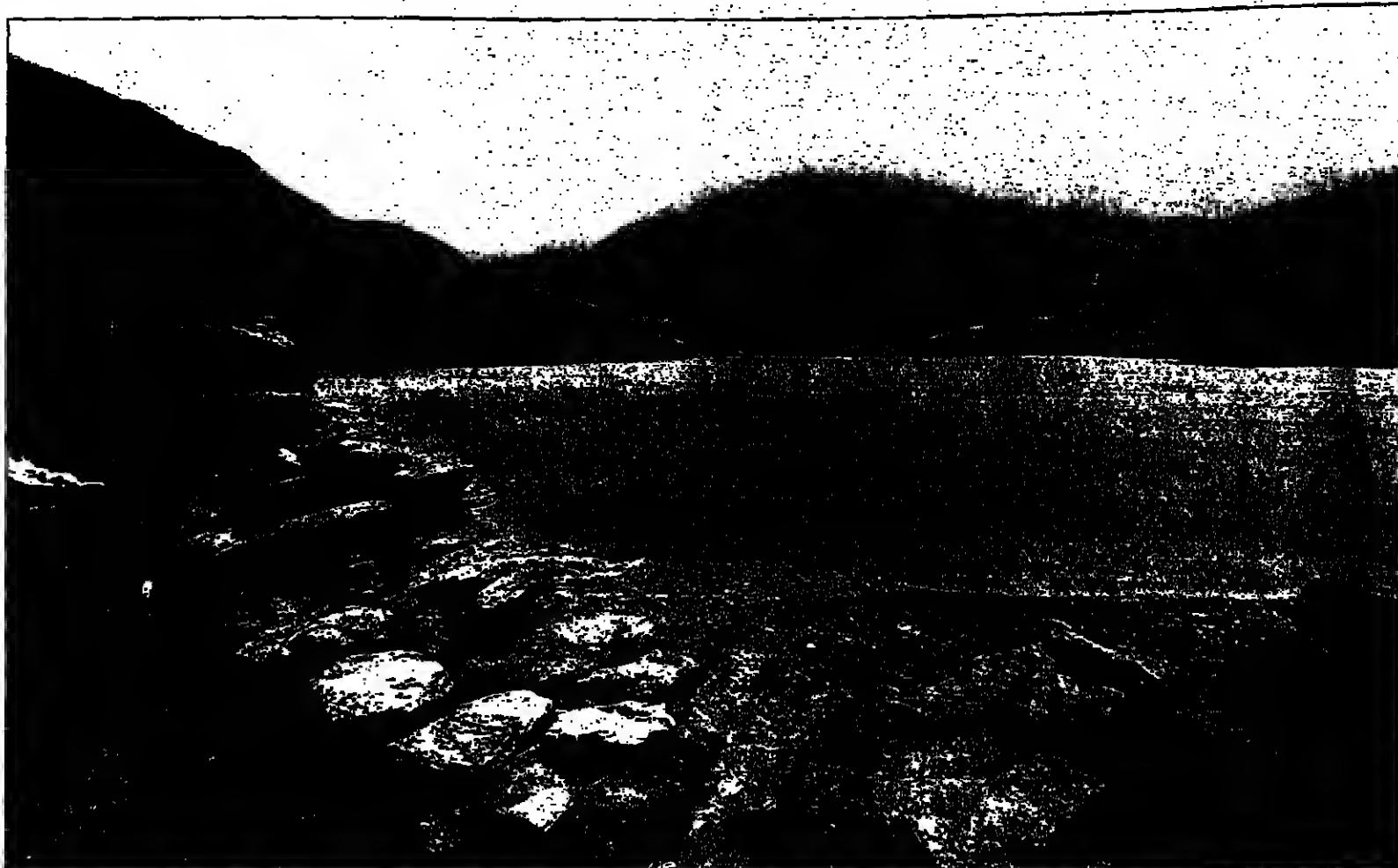
survey of 500 firms' earnings in 1993-94. The sample suggests up to 800 out of 70,000 solicitors are earning less than £10,000. The bigger the firm, the better the salaries. For 2- to 4-partner firms, the worst-paid 25 per cent averaged £24,000 a year; for 11- to 25-partner firms the average among the bottom 25 per cent was £51,000.

Last week Lord Woolf, a Law Lord, criticised young specialist barristers who earn more than his own £109,000 a year salary. He reinforced his message during the debate in Birmingham saying: "I was saying it was in their own, the profession's and justice's long-term interests only to charge reasonable fees. The same is true of the solicitor's side of the profession."

The Bar hit back this week-end. Young barristers doing criminal legal aid work often earned as little as £15,000 a year in their early years, it said.

"If you want somebody to fix your washing machine, the call out fee works out at £74 for the first hour," Mr Goldsmith said.

# Reservoir dregs pose threat to Lakeland



Free offer: If there are no takers for Kentmere Reservoir in Cumbria it may have to be breached.

Photograph: Craig Easton

CLARE GARNER

A water-tight bargain that will put paid to worries about droughts, hosepipe bans and bathing restrictions, has come on the market.

A 225-million gallon reservoir in the Lake District is seeking a new proprietor. The current owner of the Kentmere reservoir in Cumbria is offering to hand over the reservoir for free to new owners because it no longer needs the water supply for its papermaking business.

In return for picking up the £100,000 repair bill and annual maintenance costs of between £2,500 and £3,000 the new owner could enjoy the contents of the reservoir, namely water.

Due to modern recycling technology, James Cropper, of Burneside, Cumbria, no longer has any manufacturing requirement for the reservoir it has owned for the last 150 years.

Even in the driest of summers there has been no need to regulate the flow of the river by releasing water from the reservoir.

The company's chairman, James Cropper, fears that unless someone is forthcoming the reservoir will have to be breached. "I would be delighted to hand over the reservoir for free to anyone who wants it," he said.

"Obviously they would have to maintain it and get it inspected by an engineer once every six months at a cost of £700 to £800 as well as every 10 years, in accordance with the 1975 Reservoirs Act."

North West Water and the National Rivers Authority (NRA) have both declined invitations to resurrect the reservoir following its drainage for inspection last March.

Lancashire Education Authority, which rents the reservoir keeper's cottage as an outdoor centre for pupils, was offered the reservoir as a gift, but turned it down. Apparently, Mr Cropper cannot even give away the blighted beauty spot.

A spokeswoman for the NRA said: "We investigated whether the Kentmere reservoir would be of use to pollution control, flooding, fisheries, water resources or recreation. We concluded that the cost of actually maintaining the reservoir would outweigh any

benefits that we could get financially."

"When someone owns a reservoir the responsibility for maintenance lies with them. We simply can't do it. We have to work to taxpayers' demands."

Disappointed at the news, Mr Cropper said: "The NRA hasn't confirmed this to me in writing but it sounds to me like it would welcome the reservoir being breached. Any empty reservoir is not a pretty sight."

Until recently locals and visitors walked around the lonely shores, enjoying the reflection of the horseshoe of fells in the sparkling water. The route was particularly popular with people who did not dare go on the high fells. Now they are greeted by a scene of desolation, a blot on the beautiful Lake District landscape.

Ian Brodie, secretary of Friends of the Lake District, said: "Mr Cropper's company is obviously a successful one. It would be nice to see it maintaining important landscape features on the land that it owns. This reservoir is part of the industrial archaeology of the area and if it is left empty obviously it will drastically alter the landscape."

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## Firefighters to extend strikes

BARRIE CLEMENT  
Labour Editor

Firefighters' leaders on Merseyside are today expected to order an escalation of industrial action in a dispute that is increasingly seen as a test case for the service throughout Britain.

Leaders of the Fire Brigades Union yesterday expressed confidence that their 1,700 members in the North-west were voting "overwhelmingly" to escalate 9-hour strikes to 24 hours in protest at job cuts.

The union has pencilled in Tuesday next week for the first day-long walk-out and has warned that the wording of the ballot could allow 48-hour stoppages, with each firefighter

striking for 24 hours over two days. The Merseyside firefighters have already staged six strikes, including a stoppage last Saturday, in protest at the threatened loss of 20 jobs and three days' annual leave.

Ken Cameron, general secretary of the FBU, predicted a "massive" majority in favour of tougher action in the ballot result due today: "Let's hope when management sees the vote it will concentrate their minds and produce some commonsense."

He said every fire authority had been forced to look for savings "because of government cuts, but only Merseyside had sought to make compulsory redundancies."

The union commissioned the City accountants KPMG to produce a report on alternative means of saving the necessary £700,000, but the FBU claims management has ignored it. The union said the KPMG proposals would allow the authority to make sufficient savings without compulsory job losses. Mr Cameron believes there is a threat of far deeper cuts if the union fails to stop the present plans.

The authority said the union had supplied management with a two-page version of the extensive KPMG study, to which the authority had responded in a seven-page document. However, the union had refused to supply the whole document.

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Exclusive: Robert Fisk, Middle East correspondent, files the first of a five-part series on women victims of Gulf 'justice'



Death in Dammam: In the Al-Mabahith Al-'Ama compound in this Saudi coastal town, Leonarda Akula, accused of killing her employer and his family, was held in 1993 before she was taken away to be beheaded

# Secret Saudi executions shame the West

Amid a frenzy of executions in the Arab Gulf states, at least 12 women have been put to death after Islamic trials, most of them publicly beheaded by the sword in Saudi Arabia. The majority of the executions were kept secret from all but spectators for fear of public reaction in the West and followed unfair hearings which often denied the women defence lawyers.

Among the more shocking cases over the past three years were a mother and her daughter who were decapitated together in front of an audience of men in a Dhamran market last August for allegedly killing the elder woman's husband.

In most cases, the condemned women - who include not only Saudis but Filipina, Sri Lankan, Nigerian, Indonesian and Pakistani nationals - were taken from their prisons to be beheaded without warning that they were about to meet their death. In the Saudi coastal town of Dammam, a Christian Filipina accused of killing her employer and his family was dragged into a public square in 1993, forced to kneel on the ground where her male executioner snatched her scarf from her head before decapitating her with a sword.

In the emirate of Ras al-Khaima last April, a Sri Lankan girl stood weeping in the prison courtyard before a

seven-man firing squad shot her dead for killing her employer's child - a crime she had told her fellow prisoners she never committed. She was 19.

The nature of the Islamic trials and the cruel methods of execution call into question the morality of the West's military and political support for Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states whose supposedly civilised values were defended by 500,000 US, British and other Western troops after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Not a single Western embassy, however, is reported to have protested at the beheading of women - nor at the increasingly ferocious lashing of hundreds of foreign female workers in the Gulf for alleged misdemeanours.

The chilling list of executions, with most of the women under 30, will increase fears for Sarah Balahagan, the 16-year old Muslim Filipina housemaid whose death sentence for the murder of her employer comes before an Abu Dhabi appeal court this morning. She was only 14 when she killed the elderly man, whom she claimed tried to rape her. Amnesty and other human rights organisations have appealed for her to be spared.

The rapidly increasing number of women beheaded in Saudi Arabia - six this year alone - has shocked even nor-

mally conservative Saudis. "Most people accept traditional sharia Islamic law but the principles of execution are in doubt," a Saudi Islamist intellectual told the *Independent* yesterday. "Nobody can produce anything from the Koran which says the only way to execute people is by beheading - this is an old 'Nejd' tribal tradition and has nothing to do with Islam. Fear of a breakdown in security is pushing our rulers to put women as well as men under the sword."

So far this year, there have been 182 public executions in Saudi Arabia. Of the 12 women known to have been executed in the Gulf over the past 32 months, 10 were put to death for alleged murder, 4 for killing their husbands, one for killing a stepdaughter, two for killing employers and three on drugs-related offences. One woman, a Saudi named Fatima bint Abdullah, was publicly beheaded on 27 March this

year for allegedly running a brothel and "chewing qat", a leaf containing a mild drug from Yemen. According to a Saudi source, it was the qat rather than brothel-keeping that prompted the Islamic court to sentence Fatima to death.

Several of the executed women appear to have been deeply mentally disturbed when they committed their alleged crimes. Several were crimes of passion. The Filipina maid who was accused of murdering her

employer and his children in Dammam, for example, apparently tried to preserve the bodies in salt before calling the police. Del Ferouza Delaur, a young Pakistani girl executed two weeks ago, was reportedly unaware that heroin had been smuggled into her baggage when she was arrested by Saudi security police.

She was what local authorities call a "mule", an innocent set up by drug smugglers to carry narcotics. But she was publicly beheaded in the Saudi port of Jeddah on 25 September.

Occasionally, Saudi authorities have released brief announcements of the execution of women but have never revealed how their sharia courts reached their verdicts, nor why they could find no extenuating circumstances for the instances of husband-murder. Two of the women executed in the Gulf claimed - as Sarah Balahagan has done in Abu Dhabi - that their victims had attempted to rape them.

Dozens of expatriate female workers from developing countries have been deported or have fled Gulf states after their employers had beaten or raped them. The bodies of foreign women beheaded in Saudi Arabia, however, have never been repatriated to their home countries - Saudi authorities routinely refuse to reply to such requests.

Outside the Gulf, women have been largely spared capital punishment, although Jordan hanged a young housewife in November 1993 - the second woman to be executed in the country's history.

Identified as "Tamatheel S", she was taken to the gallows in Sawaka prison outside Amman for allegedly beating her elderly husband to death with a brick and burning his body

in kerosene. She was just 26. The first of the recent female deaths at the hands of the Saudi police was reported by Amnesty International, who say that Zahra Habib Mansur al-Nasser, a 40-year old Shia Muslim housewife from Awjam in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, was arrested with her husband on the Saudi-Jordanian border in July 1989, with a photograph of the Ayatollah Khomeini in her baggage.

Both were taken to the Hudaitha detention centre where the woman was reportedly tortured to death by Saudi security men three days later.

Leading article, page 18



Zahra Habib Mansur al-Nasser: 'Fatally tortured'

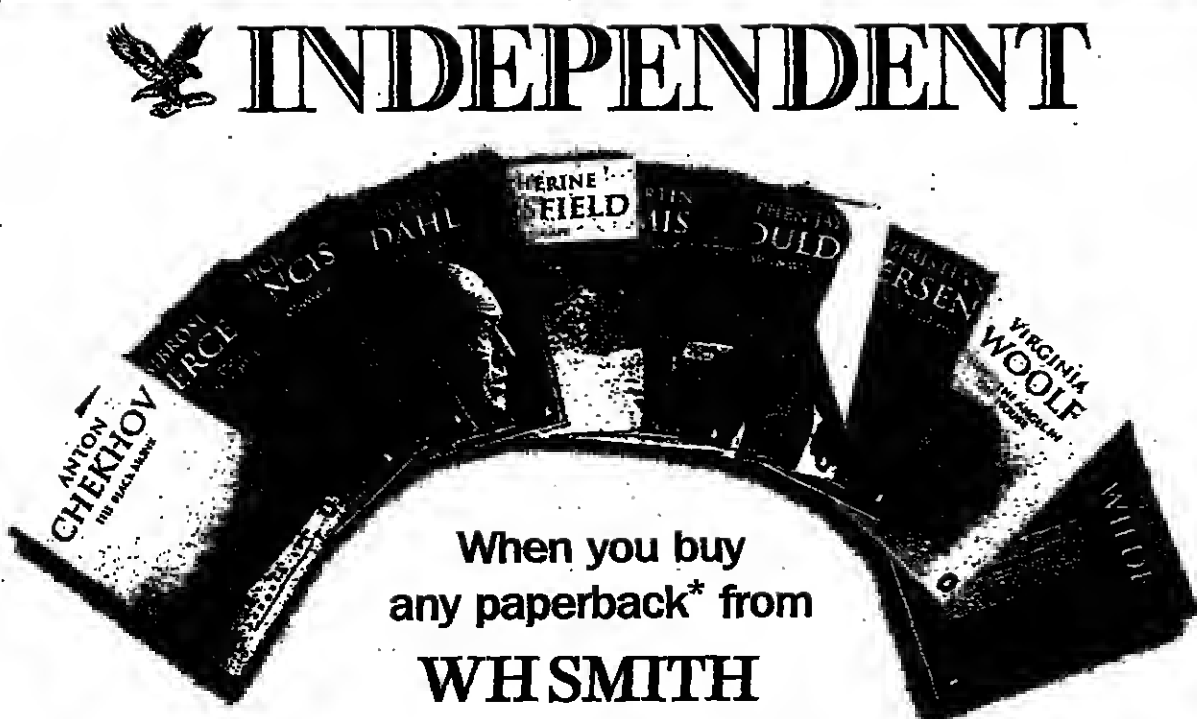
## The victims

• 15 January, 1993: Rani bint Muhammad, Pakistani, beheaded in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, for allegedly murdering her husband.  
• 29 January, 1993: Salwa bint Mohamed bin Ali, Saudi of Egyptian origin, beheaded in Dhamran, Saudi Arabia, for allegedly murdering her husband.  
• 12 February, 1993: Jimma bint Abdul Kader bin Murin al-Chamdi, Saudi, beheaded in al-Dhara, Saudi Arabia, for allegedly murdering her husband.  
• 7 May, 1993: Leonarda Akula, Filipina, beheaded in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, for allegedly murdering her employer and his family.  
• 7 October, 1994: Kordi Vilarati, Indonesian, beheaded in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, along with her husband, for alleged murder.  
• 27 March, 1995: Fatima bint Abdullah, Saudi, beheaded in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, for allegedly running a brothel and chewing the mild drug "qat".  
• 13 April, 1995: Siti Mohamed Farid, Filipina, executed by hanging squad in Ras al-Khaima, United Arab Emirates, for allegedly killing her employer's child.  
• 27 June, 1995: Unknown Saudi woman, beheaded in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for allegedly murdering her stepdaughter.  
• 11 August, 1995: Laila bint Abdul-Majid al-Hamad and her daughter, Khalid bin Hussein Jonaidi, Indonesian, beheaded in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, for alleged murder.  
• 25 August, 1995: Rabi bint Mohamed bin Harmed, Nigerian, beheaded at unknown location in Saudi Arabia for allegedly trafficking in narcotics.  
• 25 September, 1995: Del Ferouza Delaur, Pakistani, beheaded in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the allegedly smuggling heroin.

The other nine Gulf Arab states to have executed a woman in the past 32 months is Jordan where a 26-year old Jordanian woman identified only as "Tamatheel S" was hanged at Sawaka prison on 19 November, 1993, for allegedly murdering her husband.

Both were taken to the Hudaitha detention centre where the woman was reportedly tortured to death by Saudi security men three days later.

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INDA1



## international

Balkans conflict: On the eve of the ceasefire, Sarajevo almost relaxes but Bosnia's armies still strive for last-gasp gains



Three Muslim Sarajevans enjoying yesterday's sunny weather near the city's destroyed library

Photograph: Danilo Krstanovic/Reuters

## A Sunday stroll in besieged city that waits for peace

EMMA DALY  
Sarajevo

A Sunday afternoon stroll through the warm autumn sunshine is a rare pleasure come only lately to the people of Sarajevo, accustomed for so long to venturing out, knowing, feeling that every trip out could be their last. Most of those walking the streets yesterday did so from need - buses are rare, the tram-line is limited and petrol is expensive - but they were able to enjoy peace and quiet.

"It's lovely, everything is better. But look where we are standing: a sniper could shoot at any time," said Almina Kovacic, a young blonde in huge dark glasses, pointing at the rusting, bullet-ridden wreck of an articulated lorry parked at a junction, protection of a kind from the gunmen 500 yards away across the front line.

"The situation is much bet-

ter, but there is also an air of uncertainty that is killing people here. We can walk safely along the streets, but we are still imprisoned. I can walk from Bascarija but only to the edge of Nedzarica," she said. The outer limits of her world stretch from the Old Town, some 10 miles west towards the Serb-held suburb beside the airport.

Her companion, Nedžad Musovic, armed with the essential Sarajevo accessory, a modified shopping trolley to haul water, wood and other supplies, is pessimistic about the ceasefire brokered by the US envoy, Richard Holbrooke, due to start at midnight. "It's a nice idea, but tough to make real," he said.

If all goes well, water, gas and electricity should flow in tonight, and the guns quieten. Citizens classify themselves as optimists or pessimists, a fairly even split, it seems, but almost everyone sees the future as a glass half-empty. The good life does not exist, only that which gets less bad.

"There's no shooting now but we still don't have water, gas and electricity," said Minka, who lives with her husband and two daughters in a pock-marked flat overlooking Heroes' Square, one of the most dangerous places in Sarajevo. "The blue routes are open, so there is a lot of food but it doesn't mean anything to us because we still can't afford it."

The family moved out of their own flat - or rather, out of the tiny front room they ate, drank and slept in for three years, the other rooms barricaded against Serb shells and bullets fired from the line across the street - two months ago and in to a flat in the adjoining block.

"It could so easily be like last year - a few months of ceasefire and then it all starts up again," she said. "This is not peace, nor freedom. The Serbs are still only 15 miles from my house, and as long as they remain, there will be no peace."

"Freedom will come from the political negotiations," interjected her husband, Midhad, his spirits invigorated by a glass of two of beer. "And until then, so what?" said Minka crossly. "It will never be as bad as it was in '92 and '93, but I've lived the same way since the first day of

war," Midhad laughed. "She's a pessimist - I think this is definitely the end."

From their balcony, the buildings looming over the square bear mute witness to the worst days of the war: three tower blocks gutted by fire - Minka's two teenage daughters, Alisa and Alma, heard the screams of the dying trapped inside - and every facade scarred by shrapnel marks and bullet-holes. The grass has long gone, replaced by one large vegetable patch, the windows of long-dead shops draped in tattered blankets to hamper snipers. That nightmare is over, it seems. But the advances of the past few weeks - and the Holbrooke plan, if it is fully implemented - will still bring only a half-life to the city. The flow of cars has increased, but not enough to require too much order. The trams are running in the new town, but not along the road known as Sniper Alley. Shops that once sold only bare necessities now offer fax paper, UHT milk, jelly babies (or the German equivalent) and fresh fruit.

It is not enough for Minka, but Alisa and her friend Maja, a Serb forced to flee the suburb of Grbavica, 20 miles away, are easier to please; perhaps they need to believe. "It's time for the war to end. I can walk normally in the streets - but I'm still not safe, I still feel afraid," Alisa said. "Everything will be resolved over time."

"Everything will be solved over the water and electricity," Maja said. "But what happened between people..." She paused. "Very bad things happened, that can't be forgotten quickly. It's not clear to me how that will work out, how that will be resolved between people. Perhaps it will happen over time."

Midhad's army drinking buddy, Alisa, broke in. "Water, gas, electricity - it doesn't matter. We've lived more or less without them for three and a half years. The point is to sort out the signals who did this."

Crudely put, but Alisa is right: no one sane would test the ceasefire by strolling across a front-line bridge. Water may flow, and guns silenced but there will be no real life in the city until its division is overturned and its Serb besiegers somehow brought back on side.

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## Six killed in last-minute Serb shelling

Sarajevo - As Bosnia's armies fought for last-minute gains before a ceasefire due to take effect at midnight, six civilians were killed and more than 30 wounded, many of them children, by a cluster bomb fired at a refugee camp near the government-held town of Tuzla, in what appeared to be Bosnian Serb revenge for recent battlefield losses, writes Emma Daly. The UN air base at Tuzla was also shelled, bringing the risk of retaliatory air strikes.

The first shell, armed with a cluster bomb filled with shrapnel, hit the refugee centre in Zivnice, south of Tuzla, as children were playing outside in the sunshine.

A local doctor, Duska Bercevic, said 20 children were among more than 30 wounded, and many were in "extremely serious" condition.

Bosnian television, whose cameras arrived only minutes after the attack in Zivnice, showed several of the two dozen injured children awaiting treatment. They said four children and two women were killed in the attack.

Two minutes later, a shell hit the air base without causing any damage; the refugee centre and the air base were hit again in the early afternoon, but there were no further casualties.

Although Tuzla is a UN-declared "safe area", peace-keeping officials said they could not determine whether Zivnice lay within the protected zone. But the UN was "considering a range of responses" to the attack on the peace-keepers. "There have been phone calls made between the UN and Nato," an official said, implying air strikes were an option. The Croatian state news agency said Serb planes also dropped cluster bombs on villages in the Croat-held Usora River valley in northern Bosnia, causing dozens of civilian casualties.

The attacks came as the Bosnian Army and its Croatian

allies increased the pressure on front lines in north and central Bosnia, reporting gains near the Serb-held town of Doboj. Heavy fighting was reported along the line between the contested town of Otoca, close to the Croatian border, and Kijuc, which fell to the Bosnian Army last month. "We shall see the results this evening and tomorrow," said Brigadier Mirsad Selmanovic, second in command of the Bosnian Fifth Corps, amid speculation that the government was seeking to improve its position before the truce takes effect.

It is due to begin at midnight - if electricity and gas supplies are restored to Sarajevo by then. The UN and aid agencies are making frantic efforts to meet the deadline despite initial reluctance from the warring factions and a row over an unpaid gas bill.

French peace-keepers yesterday supervised a three-way mine-clearing party of Serbs, Croats and Bosnian troops, who removed explosives from a front-line area to allow engineers to start repairing pylons and electric lines. "We hope by dark tomorrow it can be completed," said a UN official.

Gas is unlikely to reach the city until tomorrow - if all goes well at a meeting in Moscow today between Bosnian officials and the Russian gas company, owed \$106m (£67m) for supplies since the war began. Engineers from the British Overseas Development Administration (ODA), who are expecting to work non-stop once the Russians give the green light, say the system could be running a day. "The process can be compressed because of the urgency," said Tony James of the ODA. "You may be talking about 10 or 12 hours to the outskirts of Sarajevo. We'd miss the deadline because we would work all tomorrow night and the gas would be into the city on Tuesday."



# Scandal threatens Nato chief's future

JONATHAN CLAYTON  
Reuters

Washington — Nato is reeling from fresh allegations of corruption against its Belgian Secretary-General, Willy Claes. Just as the alliance enters one of the most critical periods in its history, the completion of planning for a Bosnian peace implementation force, furious speculation has again broken out over Claes's political future. Nato diplomats are worried

that his presence may weaken the alliance, and are questioning how long he can hang on. "It is terribly debilitating. At a time like this, his concentration has to be on the job 100 per cent, he can't disappear into private meetings with lawyers," said one diplomat. The issue of Mr Claes's involvement in a bribery scandal, which dogged him for several weeks earlier this year, pushed his way back to centre-stage on Friday after the Belgian media

reported that the country's highest constitutional court had recommended to parliament that he face charges of corruption and fraud. More bad news could come his way today, when the Belgian court's report is discussed by a special parliamentary commission. The 11-strong panel will decide on procedure on Tuesday. In Belgium politicians can only be investigated with the approval of parliament, which has the right to indict ministers

and bring them before the constitutional court. Nato sources say that all of Mr Claes's attention should be focused on organising the biggest and most dangerous ground operation ever launched by the military alliance, rather than on newspaper headlines. The allegations against Mr Claes centre around a bribery scandal, involving the Italian helicopter company Agusta when he was economics minister in 1988, an incident which has con-

vulsed Belgian politics for the past two years. Four Belgian ministers have resigned since 1994 following accusations of kickbacks paid by Agusta to Mr Claes's Flemish socialist party. So far, there is no suggestion that Mr Claes himself received any money and he has always denied any wrongdoing. A clearly shaken Mr Claes said on Friday that he planned to carry on as head of the Atlantic alliance. "I am totally innocent, I have never done

anything wrong," he told a news conference following a meeting of Nato defence ministers in the US colonial town of Williamsburg to agree details of the Bosnian force. The incident overshadowed the success of the meeting and independent analysts once again underlined the difficulty Mr Claes faces in trying to battle on. "This simply cannot go on, it is no longer a question of his guilt or innocence, but of the damage it is doing to the alliance,"

said a senior Nato diplomat. On Saturday, while Claes travelled to Toronto to give a speech on the alliance's future, Belgium's press clamoured for his head. "If he is concerned about Nato's image... he resigns voluntarily now," wrote one columnist in *De Gazet van Antwerpen*, a Flemish daily. Nato sources say Claes may be helped by the fact that member states do not want a vacancy at the top of the alliance at such a critical time.

## IN BRIEF

### Spy chief mystery

Johannesburg — Muziwendo da Mduli, the South African spy chief found shot dead in mysterious circumstances, had been investigating the possible involvement of fellow-agents in the failed coup in the Comoro Islands, a South African newspaper claimed. The National Intelligence Agency (NIA) security chief was found dead in his car last week with a bullet wound in his head.

The *Sunday Independent* quoted an NIA director as saying the agency believed Mduli had been killed after making a breakthrough in an investigation into a possible agency role in the coup, led by the French mercenary Bob Denard. French troops crushed the coup last week.

### First release

Jerusalem — Bashayer Ali Abu Lahen, 18, became the first of more than 5,000 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel to be released under the new Israel-PLO autonomy accord. Twenty other women prisoners scheduled to be released refused to leave in protest at Israel's refusal to free four women accused of murder.

### Race still an issue

Baltimore — Pope John Paul touched on a central issue of US life, telling Americans that racial equality was as much an issue now as it was when they fought a civil war over slavery a century ago. On the last day of his five-day tour, the Pope told the country's races they had to live in harmony to be true to the ideals of the nation's Founding Fathers.

### Record Mao sale

Peking — An oil painting of Mao fetched a record 6.05 million yuan (\$461,330) at auction over the weekend. The painting depicts Mao in his late 20s during a trip to the coal mining town of Anyuan, rallying miners to stage a strike. A copy of the first issue of the *People's Daily*, published on June 15, 1948, sold for 3,580 yuan.

### Gourmet threat

New Delhi — A growing appetite among East Asian gourmets for swiftlet nests was driving the bird to extinction in India, wildlife experts say. The trade in the nests, which the swiftlets build using their saliva, moss and leaves, disturbed the birds during the breeding season on the Andaman and Nicobar islands on India's south-east coast.

## Canadian PM attacks separatists

HUGH WINSOR  
Shawinigan, Quebec

It's not the divorce, "it's their proposed conditions for remarriage that insult the intelligence", the Canadian Prime Minister, Jean Chretien, told a huge pro-Canada rally this weekend in the region he has represented in parliament for almost 30 years.

Referring to the proposal of the Quebec Premier, Jacques Parizeau, that, after a successful vote for independence in the current referendum, a sovereign Quebec would seek to negotiate a new partnership with the remains of the country it had just left behind, Mr Chretien said the proposal "flies in the face of the most elementary good sense. It is unrealistic and illusory, and would be immediately rejected by the rest of Canada."

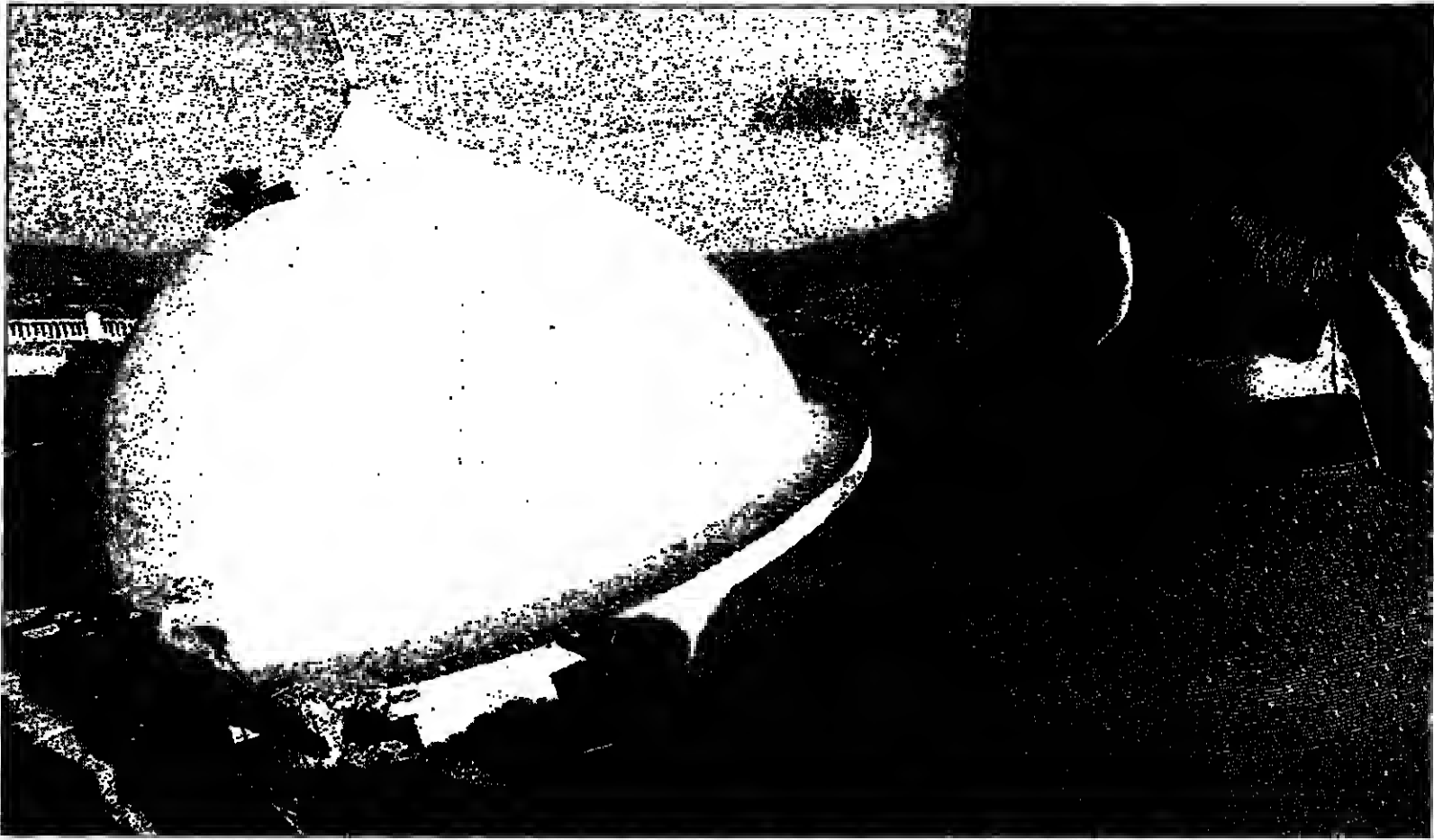
The federalists used Mr Chretien's first official foray into Quebec since the referendum campaign began to underline the second half of the national government's strategy to convince Quebecers to vote "no" on 30 October — a strategy designed to appeal to the emotional side of Quebec's often tempestuous relationship with their mostly English-speaking partners in the Canadian confederation.

The federalists' economic arguments against the separatism of Parti Quebecois were laid out earlier in a tough

speech by the Finance Minister, Paul Martin. He told Quebecers that they would face difficulties in negotiating access to the North American Free Trade Agreement, on top of the penalties the new country of 7 million people would pay in terms of investment, interest rates, currency and servicing its debt. The separatist leaders, Mr Parizeau and Lucien Bouchard, who leads the Bloc Quebecois separatist faction in the national parliament, have been appealing to Quebecers' sense of pride and destiny to boost nationalist sentiment. At the same time, they have been playing on the insecurity of French speakers about the survivability of their language and culture.

But, as much as Quebecers may feel slighted or dislike the current federal structure, every opinion poll since the last separatist scare 15 years ago shows they are profoundly attached to Canada, and both the Yes and No sides have devised strategies to exploit this attachment.

The separatists have been trying to say Quebecers can have the benefits of their own country while retaining their links to Canada through the proposed partnership agreements. The federalist approach is to remind Quebecers of the contribution they have made to the building of Canada and how well Quebecers have prospered in the larger entity.



Surveying the wreckage: A mosque damaged after an earthquake measuring seven on the Richter scale hit Sungaipenuh in central Sumatra, Indonesia, killing 100 people and seriously injuring another 700. Police joined 800 soldiers to pull bodies from rubble. Photograph: AFP

## Carey attacks Sudan's treatment of Christians

ALFRED TABAN  
Reuters

Juba, Sudan — Thousands of Christians in Sudan's war-torn south gave a tumultuous welcome yesterday to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Rt Rev George Carey. Crowds in the government-held town of Juba lined the

street from the airport to the Anglican cathedral, where Dr Carey held a service outside the compound for 50,000 people. He called on both the strongly Islamic government and the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) to seek peace. Hundreds of thousands of people have died in the civil war between the mostly Islamic Arab

north and the Christian and animist south since 1983.

Dr Carey, spiritual leader of the world's 70 million Anglicans, told the congregation, "You are not forgotten". While holding an open air service in the capital, Khartoum, he criticised the treatment of Christians in Sudan, saying he was aware they were not enjoying their full

rights, such as the right of worship. In Juba, he said: "We know of all your suffering in Sudan. We know that the war has divided you and displaced hundreds of thousands". Many people did not know where their loved ones were, he added.

Dr Carey made a controversial visit to rebel-held areas of southern Sudan in December 1993, when he omitted Khartoum from his itinerary. In response the military ruler, Lieutenant-General Omar Hassan al-Bashir, expelled the British ambassador and Britain in turn ordered out the Sudanese ambassador. The archbishop's visit to Khartoum could signal an improvement in relations.

## Polish satirist has the last laugh

It may be over six years since he lost his job as spokesman of Poland's last Communist government, but Jerzy Urban shows no sign of losing his legendary sense of humour.

Last Wednesday marked the fifth anniversary of the launch of the biting satirical *Nie* magazine and, as its founder and driving force, Mr Urban decided to throw a lavish ball to celebrate.

Guests, who included the man who declared martial law in Poland in 1981, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, and several current ministers, were asked to turn up in something evoking the spirit of the old Communist times. Several drove to the event in a cavalcade of vintage socialist-era cars. Others brought their ration books and rolls of toilet paper, a reminder of when even such basic commodities were in short supply.

Mr Urban, one of the key figures in the administration responsible for getting Poland into such an economic mess, beamed throughout. He had genuine cause for celebration. Much to his own initial surprise, *Nie*, Poland's no-holds-barred answer to *Private Eye*, has proved a phenomenal success, with a weekly circulation now standing at over 700,000.

For someone whose loyalty to the old Communist regime was unswerving, Mr Urban has negotiated the treacherous waters of capitalism with consummate skill. Last year, he personally saw a pre-tax profit of over £1.6m. "I enjoy being rich and I enjoy being independent,"



Jerzy Urban

says Mr Urban. "But I am essentially a political animal and I miss not being directly involved in government."

When Mr Urban was appointed government spokesman in mid-1981, Poland was in crisis. The Solidarity trade union, formed a year earlier, was pressing for democratic reforms and threatening to bring the country to its knees through strikes. Mr Urban firmly approved of the December 1981 imposition of martial law under which Solidarity was banned and many of its leaders imprisoned. Even when martial law was lifted in 1983, Mr Urban remained one of Solidarity's most acerbic critics, frequently using his weekly televised press conferences to pour scorn on the union and its leader, Lech Walesa.

Mr Urban's quick wit set him apart from nearly all of his Communist peers and certainly made his press conferences interesting. Millions of Poles tuned in to watch, but although they often laughed, many found his brutal style offensive.

With the end fast approaching, Mr Urban represented the government to the "Round Table" talks with Solidarity in 1989 that paved the way to the country's first partially-free elections for over 40 years. He stood for parliament in the

June poll that followed, but, like all his colleagues, was crushed in the landslide victory for Solidarity. A little over one year later, he watched in horror as the man he loved to ridicule, Lech Walesa, won the presidency.

For Mr Urban, there did not appear to be too much left to laugh about. But with his political career effectively over, he decided to return to his original calling — journalism — and to launch a satirical new weekly which would pour scorn on the country's new leaders.

The first edition of *Nie* (translated as "No") rolled off the presses in October 1990. It was like nothing ever seen in Poland before. Its language was coarse and colourful, its cartoons and pictures innovative and often sexually explicit and its mockery of President Walesa was relentless.

"Ours was the only paper that conveyed the sense of disappointment many felt in the new authorities and exposed the new cases of corruption," Mr Urban says. "It also coincided with fatigue for the sort of political debate that had been raging for the previous 10 years. People wanted their politics in a more simplified form. And they wanted some humour."

There is an obvious irony in the fact that the former Com-



Jerzy Urban: gunning for Poland's President Walesa

munist Party mouthpiece lost no time in making full use of Poland's new found press freedoms. *Nie's* relentless lampooning of the politicians of the right, moreover, undoubtedly helped pave the way for the dramatic success of the reformed communist Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), which swept back to power in Poland's 1993 parliamentary elections.

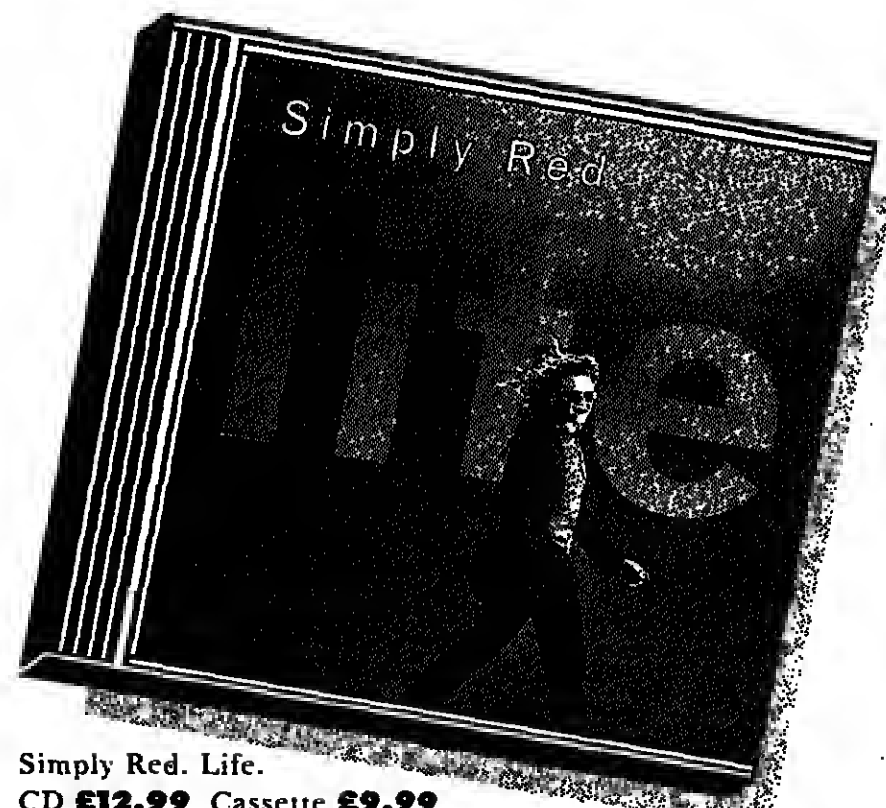
The paper is also quite clearly supporting the SLD leader, Aleksander Kwasniewski, in his bid to topple Mr Walesa in next month's presidential election. Mr Urban, still only 59, is probably too tainted with the brush of the old regime ever to be eligible for political office again. But as our interview comes to an end, the phone goes. It is Mr Kwasniewski.

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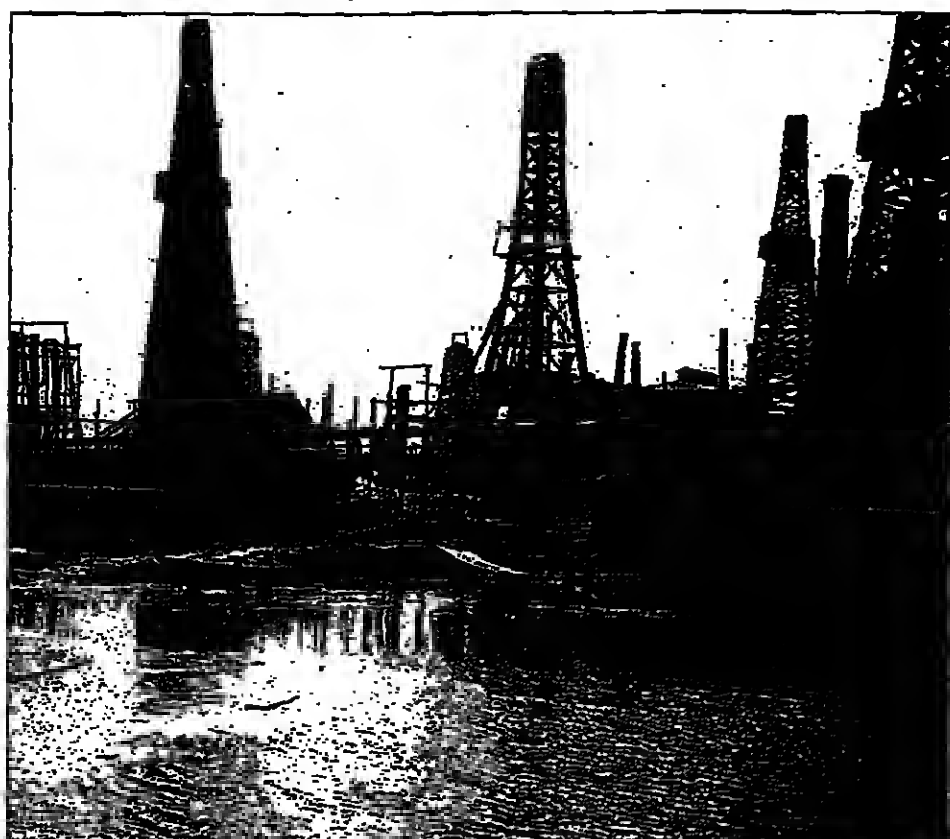
Simply Red's new album, Life, is simply brilliant. It contains their number one hit, Fairground, and is now available at WHSmith.

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## international

**Oil rights:** The fight to control the flow from Azerbaijan has revived Cold War tensions, but a compromise is set to be agreed today



Deal of the century: The Azeri capital of Baku, where the Azerbaijan International Operating Company will decide the fate of huge oil reserves Photograph: AP

## Russia fights for pipeline deal

PHIL REEVES  
Moscow

A consortium of international oil giants helping to develop Azerbaijan's huge Caspian Sea reserves will today announce how the first flow of oil will be conveyed to Western markets, closing the first chapter in a bartering process that has revived some of the fiercest emotions of the Cold War.

Meeting in the Azeri capital of Baku, the Azerbaijan International Operating Company (AIOC), which includes British Petroleum, is widely expected to reveal that it will use two pipelines – a compromise solution which will do little to ease the international tensions that have built up around what is widely billed as the "deal of the century".

The future of Azerbaijan's huge oil reserves, which some observers believe could turn the former Soviet republic into another Kuwait, is an issue in which money and politics are both at stake on a grand scale.

The Russians have long lobbied for the oil – from three fields capable of eventually yielding 700,000 barrels a day – to be pumped across their territory from Baku to the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk through a pipeline system which is largely in place.

This would supply Moscow with many millions of dollars of much-needed tariffs, although Russia has offered discounts in an effort to get the contract. Far more importantly, it would allow the Kremlin both to reassert influence over its former territory and exert control over what may become one of the most important oil supply lines to the West.

Russian leaders play down concerns over the fact that the pipeline runs through war-ravaged Chechnya, although it helps explain Moscow's speedy move to crush the breakaway republic's bid for independence.

The Americans and the Turks feel equally strongly about the issue. They have pressed hard for the consortium, which is in-

vesting \$5bn (£5bn) in the project, to include a southern route, thus ensuring that Azerbaijan does not again fall under Russian dominance. Washington, in particular, does not want to see the Russians use their pipeline as a bargaining chip in other strategic wrangles.

At the end of last week, reliable leaks emerged confirming the consortium's compromise. "Early oil" would be split between the Russian route – which would get about 2.5 million barrels a year – and a pipeline to Supsa in Georgia, from where the oil would go on to northern Turkish ports.

The Russians were not pleased. "We are disappointed at the apparent level of US influence over the decision," said a spokesman for the Caspian Pipeline Project, a three-nation conglomerate which is building out the Russian pipeline system.

The negotiating process has been fraught with behind-the-scenes politicking. Haydar Aliyev, president of Azerbaijan,

has a poor human rights record and a doubtful curriculum vitae, which includes membership of the Soviet Politburo under Brezhnev and a stint as a senior KGB officer.

Yet last week the ageing president – whose state oil company, Socar, has a 10 per cent stake in the consortium – found himself playing Juliet to several of the most powerful Romeos on the planet.

President Bill Clinton spent 35 minutes talking to him by telephone from Washington. A Russian delegation arrived with a long list of helpful proposals, including assistance with a metro system, health care and cross border co-operation – a marked change from their attitude last December when Russia closed its border with Azerbaijan, claiming it was a possible arms route for Chechen rebels.

Nor have the Georgians sat quietly by. They too have been pushing their case hard – so much so that some within the country believe the Russians,

angered by the rivalry, may have been behind one of the more sinister episodes in the former Soviet republic's recent history – the attempted assassination of their leader, Eduard Shevardnadze, on 29 August. The Georgian Prosecutor-General has issued a warrant for the arrest of Georgia's former head of security, Igor Giorgadze, a former KGB officer who was widely believed to be a puppet of Moscow.

Last week a delegation of senior Georgian officials were in the Russian capital, where they say Mr Giorgadze is in hiding, in an effort to publicise his alleged crimes.

Although they have yet to produce hard evidence, they believe it is possible that the assassination attempt was a Russian-inspired warning shot intended to deter Mr Shevardnadze from pushing too enthusiastically for the pipeline. "It is one theory that we cannot discount," a source close to the Georgian government told the Independent.



## Central Asian oil finds fuel Iran's isolation

MICHAEL SHERIDAN  
Diplomatic Editor

The struggle for influence over Central Asia's oil and gas reserves is much more than a contest for wealth and power among the countries of the region. The development of these resources will mark a fundamental shift in the 21st century away from western dependence on Gulf oil. It will diminish the importance of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf monarchies. It could also condemn Iran, the big loser, to isolation and economic collapse.

Only a few American strategic planners and politicians have been aware of these high stakes. One who has grasped the enormous implications is Senator Bob Dole. He recently voiced the hope that the United States could diversify its sources of energy and reduce its commitment to the volatile Middle East.

At the moment, statistics point to the continuing predominance of the Gulf in the oil market. The US consumes 26 per cent of global oil production. It produces only 8.6 million barrels per day (bpd) against demand of 18 million bpd and will continue to depend on imports.

The Gulf countries provide about 27 per cent of world oil production. The name of the game, however, is not present production but future reserves. It is in this strategic sense that Central Asia could hold the key to a transformed map of global economics and security.

About 63 per cent of proven

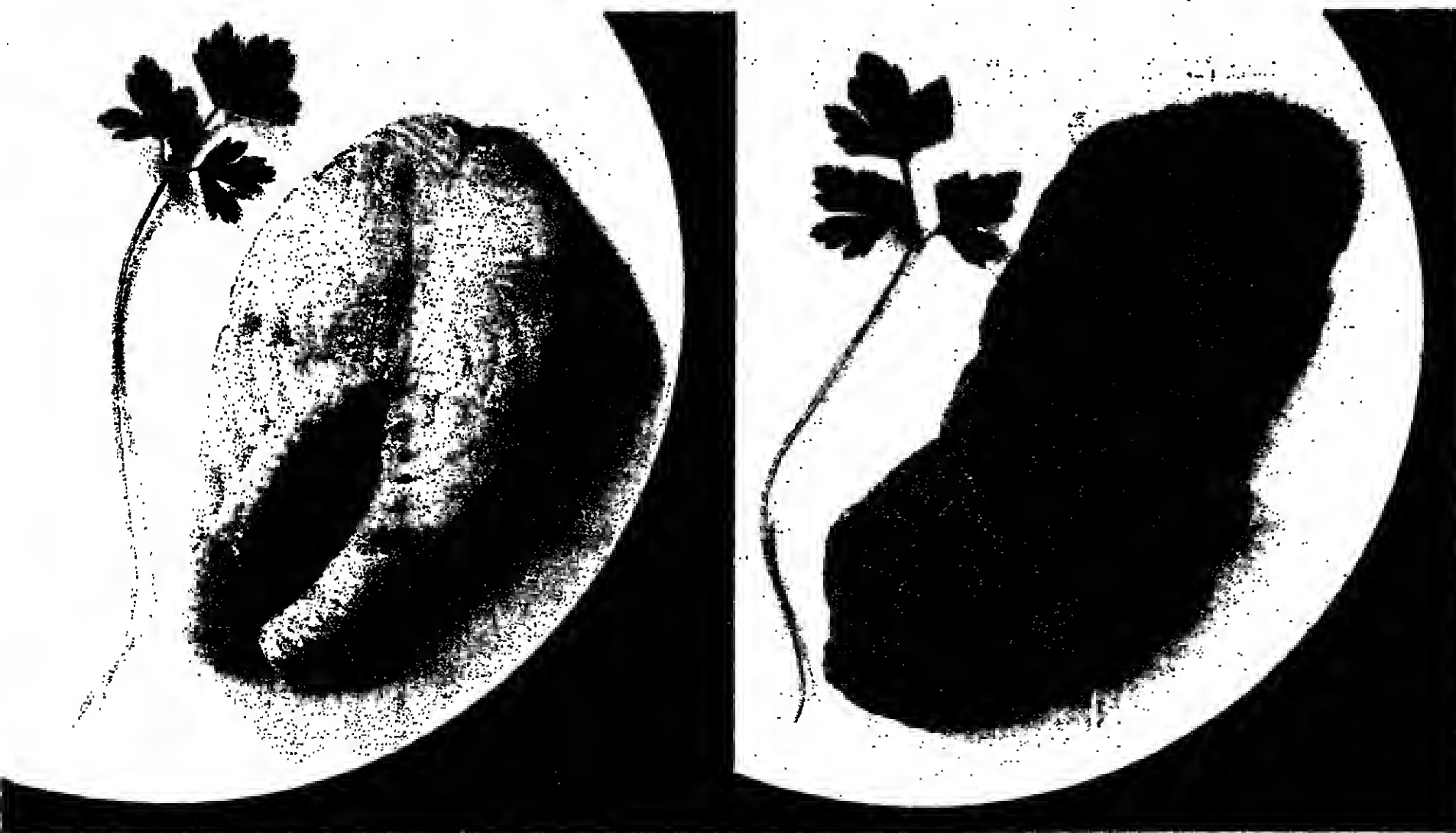
world oil reserves are in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia alone sits atop 25 per cent, while Iran holds 9.9 per cent and Iraq 8.8 per cent. But if the resources of the Caspian Sea and Kazakhstan live up to their promise, an alternative set of sources could offset the Gulf's predominance. To take one example: some oil industry analysts believe the Tengiz field in Kazakhstan could hold as much as 10 billion barrels. In comparison, the North Sea Forties field held only 3 billion.

The politics of oil are therefore set to change. "Stable" and "pro-western" Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia will continue to play a key role in supplying Asian markets. But the twin pariahs, Iran and Iraq, could find themselves pushed out in the cold under the US policy of "dual containment".

For Iran, the geopolitics look far worse. Since 1979 its economy has staggered under inflation, war and now a unilateral US trade embargo. It is pumping around 3 million bpd but cannot pay its bills.

The success of the US in its deliberate policy to cut Iran completely out of the Central Asian oil and gas pipeline plans is a significant blow to the Islamic republic. It is a dire warning that Tehran could one day find itself isolated from its markets. Any regime faced with these prospects would consider its options. Iran is spending scarce state funds on conventional arms to rebuild its army, navy and air force. If the US is to be believed, it is also developing a clandestine nuclear weapon.

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\* MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD, APPROVED STUDIES, 2, 2004, 1994.

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If a mortgage is held with First Direct or no other mortgage is outstanding on your property:		
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Loans of £50,000 and above	8.19% pa	7.79% pa
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طريق من الامل



# Karachi's murderous Genie forced back inside his bottle



Mean streets: A suspected victim of Mohajir terrorists lying dead in the Oranji area of Karachi

Photograph: AP

Karachi — All day, the men of a Karachi slum known as the "Lines" had been filing past an empty swimming pool and made to parade under a high glass booth which, in better times, had been used by judges in diving contests.

The men in the queue moved spasmodically, as if knotted by fear. Sitting inside the glass booth these days is a different kind of judge, one of life or death. They are police informers. With bandanas drawn over their faces, the informers casually nodded towards a man in the queue, then armed police would pull the suspect out for interrogation. In Karachi, arrested "terrorists" have a habit of dying in police custody.

A gun battle had broken out two days before in the Lines between two rival extortion gangs. This put Karachi's law officers in a tricky position. The city has many villains — some would put the corrupt police force near the top of the list — and these two Lines gangs happened to be the authorities' occasional allies against yet another band of gunmen, those of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM).

But with bullets flying everywhere, the authorities had no choice but to send in the Rangers, an elite paramilitary force. They didn't find much: four suspects out of the 2,000 men and boys made to march in the identity parade.

Hidden inside a rubbish bin in one house, the Rangers found a cache of AK-47 semi-

Tim McGirk on the strongman trying to stem a city's rising tide of clan violence

automatics, a few pistols, 15 empty bottles of Four Aces whisky and a hideous monkey mask of rubber and fur. One of the Rangers couldn't resist trying on the monkey mask and grunting. It was a precious find. "That mask belongs to a terrorist called the *Djin-baba* — the Genie. He wears it when he's extorting money or goes out to murder someone."

The Rangers were sent into Karachi by Pakistan's Interior Minister, General Naseerullah Babar. In Karachi, he is widely hated and feared, yet respected for his bravery. Unlike other ministers who shun the violence-ridden city, Gen Babar darts around trouble spots with a single car of armed guards. The relatives of one MQM worker, Asif Zahedi, killed on 24 September, swore that when they tried to reclaim his body from the police station, they saw Gen Babar posing for a photograph with his swagger-stick in one hand and his foot on the chest of the corpse, like some big game hunter.

It proved untrue, but such is the general's reputation that stories like this gain currency. When I met Gen Babar over tea, I asked him why such infamous tales were told of him. He didn't seem surprised. "I have better things to do than go around to see every dead body in Karachi. That's barbaric."

In his late sixties, the general is an urbane frontiersman, a much-decorated war hero from Pakistan's wild north-west. "You might say that I have a certain tough character role to play," he says. "But when I travel around Karachi, I don't see the terror in people's eyes any more. The marriage halls are full of people and music. And the militants are on the run. They have to move every couple of hours, and sleep in the mosques. Let them think what they want of me. If I can bring peace to Karachi, that's my best reward."

The worst troublemakers in Karachi, according to Gen Babar, are the MQM. An urban guerrilla army of more than 1,400, it draws support from Karachi's majority community of Mohajirs, the descendants of Indian Muslim refugees who have been allowed out of top government jobs, university posts and elected office by the native Sindhis, Baluchis, Punjabis, and Pathans. In the violent slums which ring Karachi "like volcanoes", as one social worker described them, the MQM grew from a protective gang for Mohajirs into an organisation more powerful in the city than even the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of the Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto. The MQM leader, Altaf Hussain, who is wanted on nu-

merous murder and terrorism charges is living in exile in the United Kingdom.

The top MQM leadership has either been caught or eliminated. They don't like to surrender, so most of them get killed in fire-fights," Gen Babar claimed. Nobody disputes his boast that he has helped to restore law in Karachi. So far this year, more than 1,400 people have died in Karachi's ethnic and sectarian strife, but the daily death toll has been falling. A stockbroker, Yasin Lakhani, said he overheard one trader telling another: "There were only three bodies found today, that means share prices are going up."

Gen Babar's tactics may have damaged the MQM, but in the process, he has unleashed other monsters: the security forces and a criminal element of Mohajirs known as the MQM (Hajiqi). One cotton mill owner, Farooq Sumar, has been in hiding after going public with proof that the Hajiqi had been extorting money from him. He calculates that extortion gangs such as Hajiqi rake off over £1bn a year. "Every businessman and shopowner is forced to pay, and at least 30 per cent of this money is going to police officials and the government. We're turning Pakistan into Somalia," he claimed.

Another earner for police is to arrest people, charge them with terrorism or murder, and then demand bribes of anywhere between £300 and £2,000.

## Japanese minister to resign over secret loan

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY  
Tokyo

A bitter political dispute about the legal status of Japanese religious groups will claim a high-profile victim today when the Justice Minister, Tomomi Tazawa, resigns after allegations concerning a secret loan to a powerful Buddhist organisation.

The *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper reported on Friday that Mr Tazawa, a Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) member of the upper house of the Japanese Diet, had done a back-room deal with opponents to avoid being questioned about the 200,000 yen (£1,250) loan from Riso Koshikai, a lay organisation which has links with the LDP in return for dropping the questions, the Justice Minister allegedly promised members of Reform of Heisei, an upper house grouping which includes members of the opposition Shinshinto (New Frontier Party), that he would resist gov-

ernment proposals to revise the Religious Corporation Law, which is being debated in the lower house of the Diet.

Mr Tazawa denied the charges on Friday, as an investigation was launched on the orders of the Prime Minister, Tomiichi Murayama. Over the weekend, however, it became clear that he could not survive. He will be replaced by Hiroshi Miyazawa, another LDP member of the upper house, and the brother of the former Prime Minister, Kiichi Miyazawa.

More than 180,000 religious groups are registered under the Religious Corporation Law, which grants them lucrative exemptions from income and property tax. The coalition government, in which Mr Tazawa's LDP is the leading partner, has been considering its revision for six months, since the sarin nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway, universally attributed to the apocalyptic Aum Shinri Kyo cult, which became rich through property deals and donations.

But the proposed legislation has provoked strong opposition from Buddhist and Christian organisations, and has become the focus of a party political row.

The wealth and grass-roots influence acquired by Japan's religious groups also allow them to wield considerable power among voters. Shinshinto, which stands for the practice of defeating the evil of the next general election, has huge electoral influence from its association with the Gakkai, a lay Buddhist organisation supported by 8 million families nationwide.

Many Shinshinto politicians view the proposed revisions to the law as an attack on their core supporters — hence their eagerness to enlist the sympathies of Mr Tazawa.

Despite denying allegations of a secret deal, Mr Tazawa admits the loan, which he has repaid in full. However, he broke Cabinet regulations which require ministers to disclose assets and loans.



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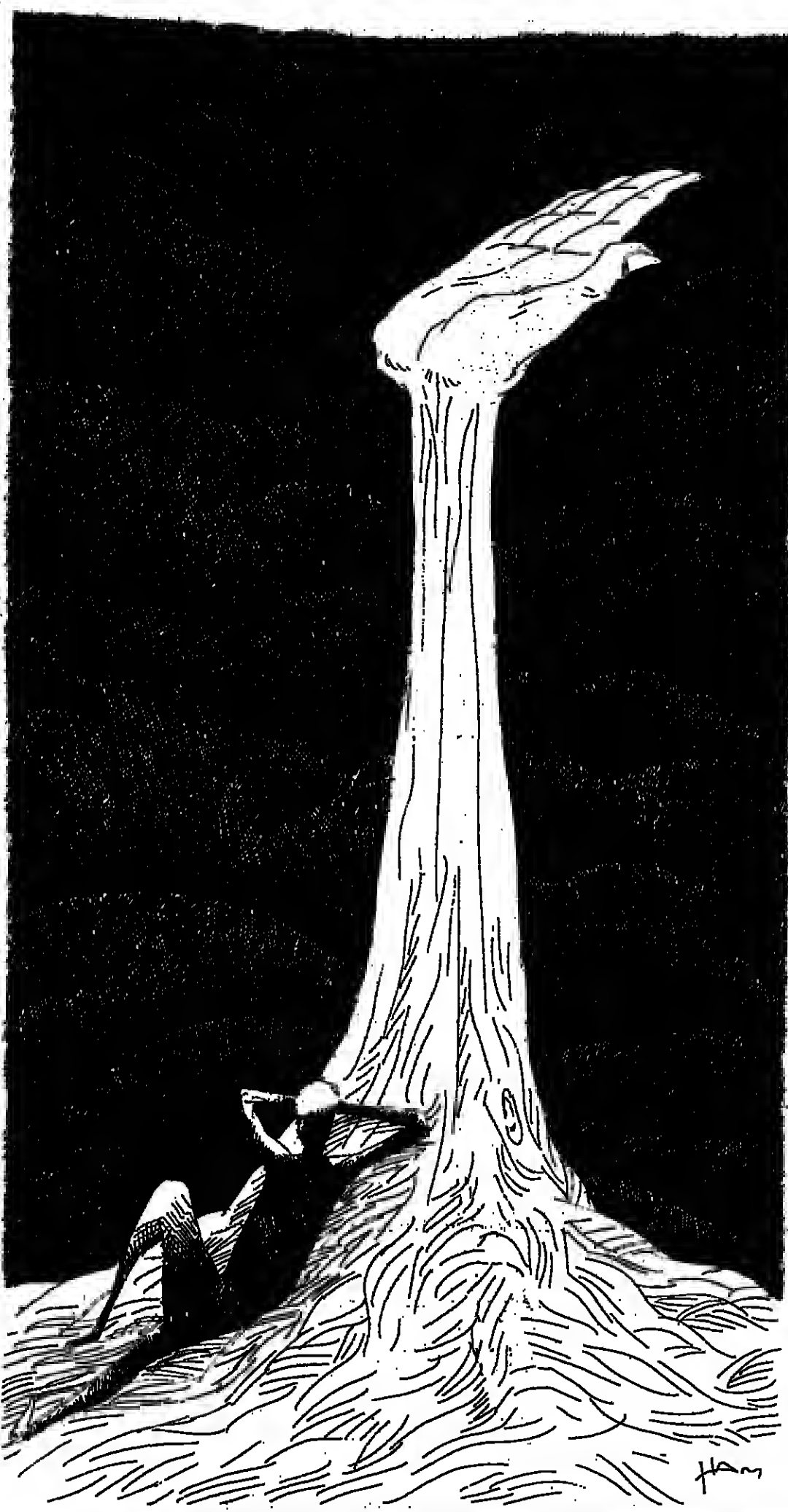






The shirts have changed colour, the rites have been altered, but the word still fits. A warning by Felipe Fernandez-Armesto

# Fascism is with us, if only we will see it



"It's really fascist to say, 'I love you,'" says a character in the cult film *Barbaric*. You can see what she meant. A declaration of love is an attempt to control. It ties bonds of obligation. It snags emotional snares. It represents a claim to authority over the body of the beloved – the power of the slave-driver and tyrant throughout the ages.

The audience, of course, is meant to laugh the line off as a wobbly flabby abuse of language, typical of the sloppiness which dilutes political rhetoric. In the lexicon of the left, from the 1920s to the 1980s, "fascist" was a graffiti sprayed indiscriminately over any opponent. The effect was to make the accusation unconvincing and to let the real fascists off. Now we have gone to the other extreme. We use the word so guardedly and with so many qualifications that almost any potential Duce or Führer can claim exemption, no matter how far to the right, how bloodied with violence or how twisted with hate.

The time for fastidiousness is over. We have to be frank in identifying fascism, wherever it rises to the surface, at the first flash of its fins – because, just as you thought the world was safe for democracy, fascism is flexing its jaws offshore.

Academic experts have reclaimed "fascism" as the name of a syndrome of features common to specific European political movements in the period between the First and Second World Wars. Yet even the movement's defining characteristics were hard to specify. It had an opportunist's adaptability, a quicksilver slipperiness, a politico's unwillingness to be precise. "There are too many programmes," said Mussolini, refusing to commit himself to another. Fascism was an agile insect, never still long enough to swat.

Today's fascisms can be equally elusive. We must be flexible, too, and adjust our aims as the target dodges and flits. By defending it too narrowly, we disarm ourselves against it. The stricter our definition, the less recognisable a new form of fascism becomes, because any peculiar features seem to disqualify it. The shorter the historical period to which it is made to belong, the slither our scope for recognising its recrudescence.

Today in every continent vicious authoritarian movements are threatening freedom and compassion, justice and humanity. We should not be afraid of comprehending "fascism" broadly enough to fit them. It will help us to recognise them for what they are: threats in a decent society, potentially as destructive as any we have confronted before. Today, copy-book conditions for a fascist resurgence exist wherever Communism is recalled with loathing, while democracy is being tried by disillusionment. Elsewhere, in societies rent by growing wealth gaps, besieged by crime or ground down by unfundable expectations, fascism can promise instant Utopia, infused by force.

a bundle of sticks with an axe through the middle of it, carried before magistrates as a symbol of their power to scourge or behead aberrant citizens. These images of the bloodstained instruments of law enforcement, which Mussolini adopted as what would now be called "logo" of his party, express the essence of fascism better than any definition you can write down. Fascism is the weal of the rod and the gash of the axe: the smack of a system of values that puts the group before the individual, order before freedom, cohesion before diversity, revenge before reconciliation, the supremacy of the strong before the defence of the weak.

It assumes the supreme value of a particular order of society – without necessarily specifying that order in any agreed way – and justifies, even celebrates, its violent enforcement by the obstruction or obliteration of dissenters, deviants, misfits and subversives. We should identify fascism not only by its conformity to a checklist of past examples, but also by the effects you can feel: the sweat of the fear of it, the stamp of its heel. The colour of its shirts may change or fade. The form of its

waged wars of extermination against minorities, launched imperialistic ventures against neighbours, and copied the anti-Semitic frenzy of the Nazis. He looks, walks and quacks like a fascist.

Islamic fundamentalism is one of the enemies he fears most, but it represents a similar kind of menace, intolerant of pluralism, terrifying to dissenters, bloody in its enforcement of moral conformity. It has escaped classification as fascism on the grounds that it is religious: but Franco and Perón escaped largely on the same grounds.

A society that exalts war as virtuous is likely to be a danger to the rest of the world, whether or not it calls war "holy". The fact that fascism was once secular does not mean that it can ever be religious.

Some of the most threatening forms of quasi-fascism today are followed by ayatollahs and tele-presbyters of the "moral majority", who insist on the unique credentials of a given set of values and want to force them on dissenters. In parts of Latin America, radical Protestant sects are already guilty of trying to mobilise congregations in support of military-backed dictatorships and hierarchies of wealth and race.

were run like businesses". Where there is a crisis of credibility in traditional politics, electorates may be tempted to try out the business model for government – just as, in previous crises, they accepted the military one.

Science is supplying the arguments and techniques for future fashions in fascism. Just as scientists of a former age made the gas chambers and super-weapons, so those of today are preparing the eugenics labs and the technology of genetic engineering. What Hitler failed to achieve by exterminating underclasses and deviants, eugenics engineers now threaten by genetic manipulation.

Just as the doctrine of natural selection was formerly abused by racism, so today's geneticists – as unwittingly, in most cases, as the evolutionists of the 19th century – are creating a framework into which a new form of social Darwinism, which damns the weak, can be slotted. Exponents of the "selfish gene" seem to vindicate Hitler's "divine commandment, thou shalt preserve the species".

Modern science has confronted us with a nakedly amoral and aggressive natural world, in which the source of progress is an exclusive code of collective survival, programmed into our DNA.

The extinction of individual lives is a sacrifice properly made in the interest of the species – like those of the runts forbidden to mate or the spider eaten when copulation is completed. A human world regulated along similar lines should, without hesitation, be called fascist.

Meanwhile, we are creating an environment propitious for fascism. The pace of change forced by breakthrough technology is unsettling to most people and bewildering to many. In this state of mind, electors reach for "men of destiny" and prophets of order.

In increasingly complex societies – struggling to cope with rising expectations, gigantic collective projects, baffling demographic imbalances and alarming external threats – order and social control come to be more highly valued than freedom and human rights. Perceptions of society undermined by moral irresponsibility, sexual permissiveness, an alienated underclass, terrorism and rising crime are the fuel of fascist revanche.

Faced with these threats, we should be robust with our language. As with every other weapon in our armoury, we should keep it sharp, but wield it freely. At present, fascism is being allowed to go unlabelled – the hate whose name we dare not speak. It is time to rehabilitate the word and harness it as a signal to vigilance.

The writer is the author of *Millennium*, published by Bantam Press, £25.

## Fascist threats escaped in disguise and are still effectively exonerated by historians fastidious with definitions

rites may be altered or discarded. Its models of society may differ. Still, you can always know it by its works.

Even in the age of democracy's wars of defence, fascist threats escaped in disguise and are still in effect exonerated by historians fastidious with their definitions. Franco's Spain and Salazar's Portugal were allowed to survive the Second World War. Militarist Japan, Brazilian "Integralism" and even Romanian "Guardism" have been absolved of the taint of fascism by historical revisionists who have pointed out the peculiarities that distinguished them from Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany.

Perón could come to power in post-war Argentina, calling himself a "Justicialist": he ransacked the fascist tradition for policies and techniques, including "economic self-sufficiency" and the sickening leader-cult, but, like Franco, he distanced himself cunningly from model fascism by incorporating the rhetoric of traditional Catholic political thought. The world of their day should not have scrupled to admit that these dictatorships were fascist; nor should leftist critics win used the world freely have been accused of devaluing it.

Let us not make the same mistake again, but be frank about classifying current threats. At one extreme, Iraqi Ba'athism under Saddam Hussein is such a close match with models of the Thirties as to be undeniably fascist. Saddam, who avows admiration for Hitler, has organised Iraqi society for war, invoked the inspiration of an ancient Reich,

Some religious cults, with their crushing effects on individual identity, their ethic of obedience to charismatic leadership, their paranoid habits and their campaigns against the rest of the world, behave in frightening ways like early fascist cells.

In the West, we all know about Italian post-fascists, French Frontists, German neo-Nazis, Balkan ethnic cleansers. But we are not on our guard against the more insidious fascist menace inside our own scientific and business establishments. No one who fears fascism can contemplate with equanimity the growing world power of big business corporations. Despite the common ground staked by liberalism and capitalism in the 19th and 20th centuries, business has had, since then, a poor record in opposing fascism. Business demands slack economic regulation and firm social control: the combination that brought the support of the prosperous for Hitler and Mussolini.

The "competitive" ethic of the trading arena includes many virtues, but it condones the oedipal to extinction. Big businesses own commonly have uniforms to inculcate corporate identity. The model of business organisation – with its secret decision-making, unelected hierarchies, leader-cults, chains of command and subordination of the individual employee to the good of the firm – is fine for business. But, if replicated in government, it would produce fascism.

Businessmen often say that governments would be better "if they

## Diary

RUTH DUDLEY EDWARDS



Two communications from New York drew my attention to the papal visit. First a fax from my friend Priscilla beginning: "Somewhere hidden among the megaliths of mid-town Manhattan there is a lone infidel bellowing out the lyrics to 'No Pope of Rome' – a loyalist ditty she learnt when I took her last year to observe an Orange march and she rediscovered her Ulster Presbyterian roots."

My four-year-old godson, Aidan (born a lapsed Presbyterian, which is why a lapsed Catholic was deemed a suitable godmother), provided balance by sending me a request from Cardinal O'Connor to make a donation towards the costs of the papal visit in exchange for being listed on the "St Patrick's Cathedral Papal Honor Roll of Donors". He sent me also a green bookmark featuring St Patrick's in gilt, with a note saying, "Mummy hunted in the shop for something to go with your new Gerry-Adams-and-Nelson-Mandela mug and Orangeman's bowler, but she couldn't find anything sufficiently inappropriate."

No, Aidan, this is fine, for if I place the bookmark in the mug it may stop people drinking out of it. Last week my houseguest Kathy thoughtlessly used the mug. Equally thoughtlessly I put it in the dishwasher. I have to report that while Mandela still looks fine, Gerry Adams is fraying badly round the edges. Is this a miracle? Or a touch of the Dorian Grays?

I had no reason last week for the story of Saturday night in the provinces. I arrived at the international crime writers' conference in Nottingham just in time for dinner with those mates who – like me – couldn't face the banquet. When we left the hotel, we were plunged immediately into what in Irish mythology is known as *Tír na nÓg* (the Land of the Young), for the streets were packed with several thousand under-25s eyeing each other up.

Feeling like a quintessence of Rip Van Winkles, we raced for the first eatery for grown-ups. "The whole city is pulsating with life and sexual energy," observed John, surveying the cavernous and almost empty rooms, "yet we find ourselves in a restaurant whose only other customers seem to be husbands and wives who have run out of conversation." We fell out a bit as to whose first course was the worst. But since we



There may be Orangemen in the Apple

had all ordered the same main course there was unanimity: it was really, really terrible. "We should complain," we agreed, but added wimpishly, "What's the use?" Then the Italian waiter made a cardinal error. "Did you like it?" he asked Julia. Now the publisher Julia Wisdom may for a good reason be known as "Midget" but she is a brave and truthful midget. "No," she said. "You didn't like the saltimbocca? Why not?" "Because it didn't taste nice." Had he had hair, he would have tossed it. "Perhaps by the year 2000 because of the Common Market you will appreciate good food," he said. That did it. "I didn't like it either," I said. "The sauce was awful," said John Malcolm, writer of cultivated mysteries, shocked out of his normal amiability.

"Made with Bisto," I muttered. "The chef might at least have used fresh sage," growled Val McDermid, exaggerating her already intimidating Scots accent. "Tell him it's easy to grow."

The waiter avoided Val, who looks as if she kick-boxes as lethally as her private-eye heroine, and turned threateningly on Janet Laurence, who superficially resembles the kind of Tory wife who stands by her husband. "Tell me what was wrong with it?" he demanded.

"Everything," she responded calmly. "To start with, the meat was not fresh." And as befits someone who writes culinary mystery stories of great authority, she explained how saltimbocca should be cooked. The waiter crumpled and slunk away.

We harboured no ill-will, for everything about the restaurant and the meal was so frightful that we all hugely enjoyed bitching about it. Besides, we were entranced by our introduction to the Euro-insult.

Further to the matter of Joseph Pujol, Le Pétomane. "Now you really will be well informed," said Ron Batesman in the note accompanying his kind present of a biography of the champion farter, which proved to be exactly as John Miller described it – "in that interesting category of things that inform the mind without necessarily improving it".

"Is a petter fish someone who has stolen your thunder?" asks Bob Benzie.

Peter Fisk eschews scatological interpretations of *péter* in favour of "to explode" (but then – as he admits – he has long had a personal interest in the verb). He thinks that in the phrase "hoist by his own petard" the Shakespeare was referring to the small bomb of that name rather than meaning "that someone rose in the air from the result of an intestinal disorder".

However John Matlock – who was married to me for 16 years and informs me in a resigned way that he told me all about Le Pétomane long ago – thinks many of Shakespeare's audience would have known of the vulgar derivation. "I think when most people show off with the 'hoist with

his own petard' quote," he adds, "they think it means 'hanged with his own rope' or 'yanked with his own dagger'."

I had to look up "yerk", which means "struck". And yes, John, I bet you told me that, too. But you more than most will know the deficiencies of my memory.

Reporter Una alleges that last week she heard President Clinton advising combatants in the former Yugoslavia to lay down their arms and pull up their sleeves.

Hidebound in prosody  
Ruthie the Diarist  
Boringly limits her  
Metrical range,

Telling her readership,  
Ultra-mendaciously:  
"Fed up with limericks?  
Next week we change!"

OK, OK, S Robinson. I can take a hint. However I would like you to know that the first time I met Seamus Heaney properly we sniggered over a rude limerick that our mutual friend George had told me to remind him about. I'm not going to abandon limericks completely and next week I'll be publishing some of the Euro variety, but yes, you can get cracking on treating topical themes in new verse-forms – the double dactyl, as seen above, and the clerihew, modelled today by Andrew Belsey.

Mr Anthony Blair  
Demonstrated considerable flair  
In turning his outfit, Labour,  
Into a party of the good neighbour.



Heaney: prizes a good limerick

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**Guardian Health**



# INDEPENDENT

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## Alan in Arthur's seat

If Peter Mandelson, Philip Gould, all the Saatchi brothers and the entire US advertising industry had been asked jointly to dream up the perfect launch for Labour's campaign to fight the next election, they might just have come up with last week's threatened defection of Arthur Scargill from New Labour to socialist pastures unnamed and yesterday's actual move of Alan Howarth MP (Conservative to Labour). The old class warrior of another era trudges off trailing his megaphone, a one-nation Tory arrives, borne on a warm wind – fresh with the scent of rose petals – to reassure the voters. They'll be whooping it up in Islington tonight.

For all the indignation – much of it genuine – expressed by his former colleagues at Mr Howarth's decision, the charges of treachery or of being a rat deserting a sinking ship will not wash. A cursory glance at the things that Mr Howarth has been saying and doing over the past couple of years shows that his defection is completely logical. Over the Disability Discrimination Bill, Mr Howarth showed courage and tenacity in opposing the Government's disgraceful decision to permit discrimination against the disabled in more than 90 per cent of British companies. He voted against the Jobseeker's Bill, argued for more money for education and has spoken out against xenophobia in the party. In a political world less dominated by whips and nervous careerism, such moves as Mr Howarth's would be more common and less surprising. More MPs from all parties ought to do it.

The worries about him begin when his letter of resignation is subjected to scrutiny. What exactly does Mr Howarth wish to achieve inside the Labour Party?

According to the letter, he has argued for the past three years that the Tories "should return to the 'one nation' tradition [and] heal the divisions in our society". Now, he says, he sees Labour as the one-nation party.

This is not encouraging. The idea of one nation is one of the most sterile clichés of modern British political life. It is either used (as by John Major in his "a nation at ease with itself" speech) as a cover for inactivity, an excuse for dumping unpopular stances – or (as by Margaret Thatcher in her gut-wrenching "Francis of Assisi" quote in 1979), as a meaningless piety. All too often it denotes a return to the Butskellite post-war consensus, where tough decisions are dodged in the hope of avoiding upsetting people – with the eventual result that public expenditure occupies an ever larger share of the nation's wealth. It becomes a cover for risk aversion and an unwillingness to debate or take radical steps.

If this cosiness is what Mr Howarth yearns for, then Labour has too many of his kind already cluttering up its benches, ready to oppose any uncomfortable radicalism. There are, however, two strands in the wind that give rise to optimism. In an article for this newspaper earlier in the summer Mr Howarth reminded us all that "gouverner c'est choisir" – government is about taking tough decisions. Second, earlier this year Mr Howarth courteously but firmly upbraided the Shadow Health Secretary, Margaret Beckett, for failing to speak the language of priorities.

These examples are not conclusive. But they give us a little hope that Mr Howarth could be as awkward and rumbustious a Labour MP as he has been a Tory one. And that is what the country needs.

## The Gulf widens over executions

The news that Saudi Arabia has executed 11 women – all of them apparently beheaded in public – within the past three years is truly shocking. There may be other executions of women that we do not know of, quite apart from the 182 men who have also been decapitated, supposedly according to Islamic law, since January of this year. Among the most dreadful of the executions, as our Middle East correspondent reports today, was that of a mother and daughter who were beheaded together in Saudi Arabia in August for allegedly killing the elder woman's husband, the girl's father.

What should be our reaction to such ferocious deeds by governments, for the defence of whose freedom – if that word does not lose its meaning in such a context – Britain, America and other western nations sent half a million troops to the Gulf in 1990?

Inevitably, the Saudis and their Gulf neighbours will try to excuse their behaviour by claiming that threats to civil order must be met with a "strong hand". Gulf rulers argue that these punishments must be seen as part of a cultural, even tribal tradition very different from our own.

Such moral relativism is as unacceptable as it is misleading. Many of the hearings that sentenced these women were travesties of justice; in some cases, it is reported that the women were given no defence lawyers. The trials themselves were held in secret and the sentences only revealed – and this rarely – after the executions had taken place. Even those who accept capital punishment in specific circumstances will find no sanction for the act of beheading in the Koran. And it cannot be argued that men and women must receive identical punishments in Saudi Arabia on spurious grounds of equality. For how can a kingdom that does not even allow women to drive cars hold them responsible for their alleged crimes?

Our response to events in the Middle East has almost always been flawed, the reporting of wars and revolutions generally skewed to present a favourable view of those "allies" that support the West's policies in the region. Thus human rights abuses in countries like Iran have been rightly condemned, but those in Saudi Arabia have not elicited a mouse-squeak of complaint by the US and British governments. Indeed, ever since the liberation of Kuwait, they have laboured to persuade us that Saudi Arabia is becoming more liberal, not more restrictive, more democratic, not more theocratic.

Of course, we derive massive economic benefit from our arms trade with the Gulf. And, sadly, few nations are prepared to lose millions of pounds of exports to save a few human lives. But perhaps the time has now come to tell our friends in the Gulf that we shall in future be much less ready to rescue them from external tyrannies, if they do not end the cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments that they impose on their own people and upon their guest workers.

ANOTHER VIEW Bill Rodgers

## A bold and brave decision

Alan Howarth has made a bold, brave decision and all praise to him. But he has a bruising time ahead. There will be exhaustion and disappointment, and both the exhilaration and pain of politics. Those of us who formed the SDP 14 years ago at least had the comfort of numbers. But Howarth will be on his own, and lonely.

There may be 30 or 40 other Tory MPs who broadly share his views, but it will be a surprise if any join him. A few will remain his friends and invite him to join them for a drink. But most will say he should have stayed to fight, even when they have done precious little fighting themselves. When he visits the House of Commons – which he must do as soon as it returns – they will slip away as they see him approaching them along the library corridor, making an unexpected visit to the Gents to avoid him. In the Smoking Room they will turn their backs.

The constituency will be difficult. He will be called "traitor" in the street. He will be accused of using the Conservative Party as a stepping-stone to a status he does not really deserve. There will be obscene, anonymous postcards written in bright colours with a felt pen. Most difficult of all, there will be the sad, tearful faces of those who respected – perhaps even loved – him who now feel abandoned.

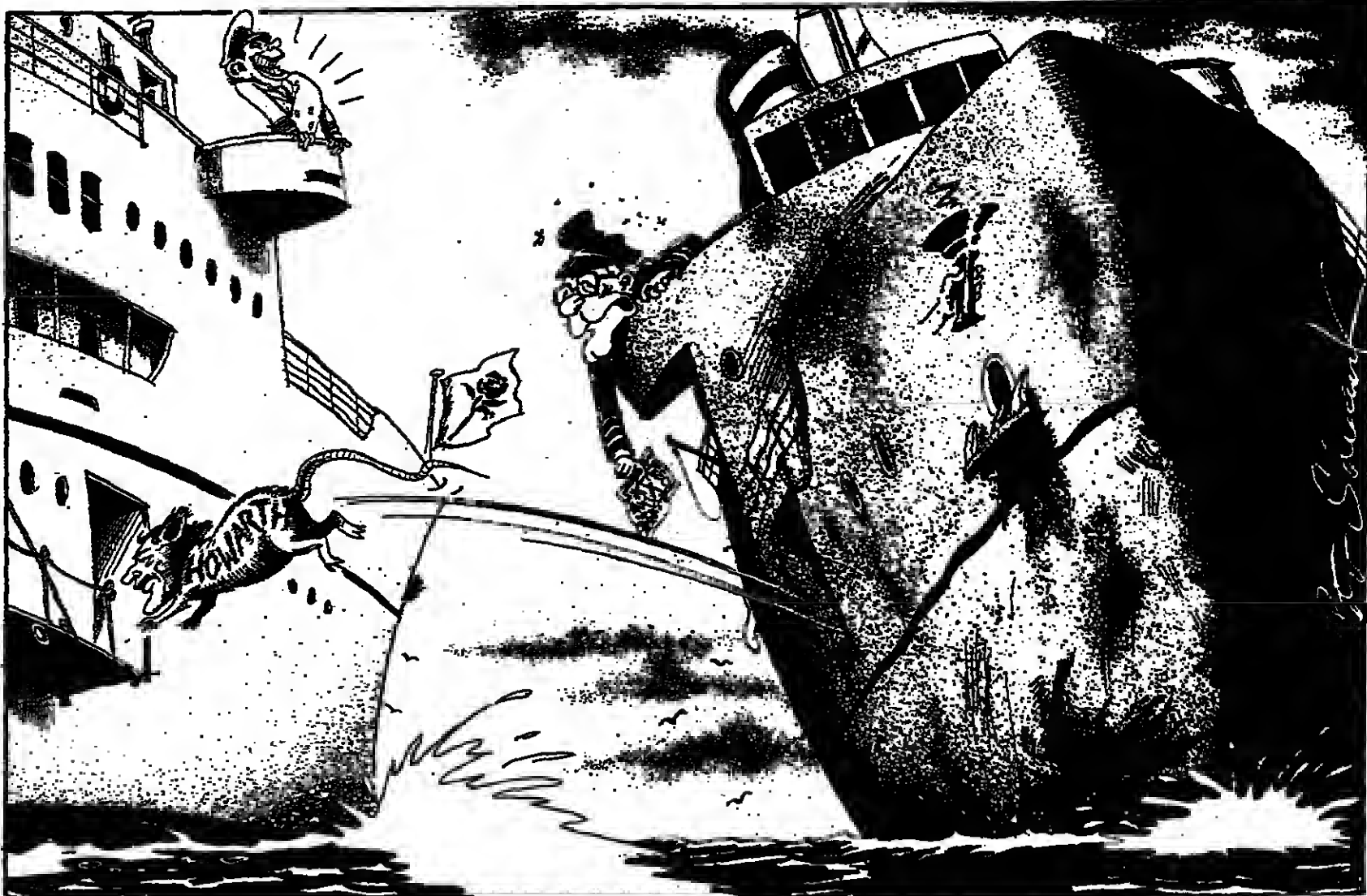
The leadership of the party will be

too shrewd to call him "traitor". They will prefer to diminish him: "We all know Alan... quite a good junior minister... but never really significant." He will be the sheep that lost its way. Howarth will feel most uncomfortable in his decision to remain as MP for Stratford-on-Avon. He is right in calling constitutional convention to his defence and quoting precedent. When the SDP was launched, this was the position we adopted. But even supporters found it difficult to explain.

He knows, of course, that if he fought a by-election and won, he might not survive a general election. Alternatively, if he simply resigns and does not stand, the seat would probably go to the Liberal Democrats, who were runners-up last time. Tony Blair's heavy men will have explained how unacceptable that would be.

Howarth must cast his mind ahead. Perhaps, early in the next century when the Tory party has moved back to the centre, there will be those who will say, "You helped to do it, Alan. Our party has now become the party you wanted it to be all those years ago." After all, it is the SDP that helped Blair create the Labour Party that Howarth believes is now fit for him to join.

Lord Rodgers of Quarry Bank was a Labour MP and former member of the Social Democratic Party.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Balancing solicitors' needs and clients' rights

From Mr Keith Richards

Sir: The "angry" reaction of the Law Society's president, Martin Mears, to the damning *Which?* report from the Consumers' Association on the quality of legal advice clouds the real issue ("Consumers lay down the law on bad advice", 5 October).

There is no arguing with the central, depressing conclusion of *Which?*'s rigorous and comprehensive research – that solicitors too often hand out shoddy and inappropriate advice, despite a clear duty of care to clients, and the undisputed responsibility of the Law Society to promote high standards among its members. The Consumers' Association has its own responsibility – to protect consumers and to act in their interests – and the only way to put the quality of solicitors' advice to the test was to do this anonymously, consulting the high-street professionals just as any consumer would.

All this clearly irks Mr Mears. However, in alleging that one tiny aspect of one of our standard legal answers was incorrect, he is mistaken. He claims that our

researchers could not have referred a complaint to the building society ombudsman, because the ombudsman could not deal with cases earlier than June 1994. In fact, a referral was entirely possible, depending on the status of the mortgage.

Perhaps we should not be surprised at the Law Society's inactivity. In a pamphlet issued before his election with his then running mate and now vice-president, Robert Sayer, Mr Mears urged a "fundamental change in attitude by the Law Society", with "less emphasis on clients' rights and more on solicitors' needs". Sadly, the Law Society's reaction to the *Which?* report suggests that the promised "fundamental change" is already under way. But surely "solicitors' needs" include maintaining a respected and trusted profession? Without respect and trust, there is little left.

We would have been delighted to report that the majority of solicitors were giving clients best advice, and being fair and open about charges. This was not to be. Our message might not be one that Mr Mears welcomes, but a

recognition of the problems of the profession, and a willingness to put the Law Society's house in order, would be more positive than "shooting the messenger". Yours faithfully, KEITH RICHARDS Senior Lawyer Consumers' Association London, NW1

From Mr James P. Horan

Sir: I was interested to read your article "Blair in plea to lawyers" (5 October). Are all trades and professions now to be expected to work for free?

If I need an electrician or other tradesman, I have to pay his bill, if need be by borrowing money from the bank. If people need dental treatment not covered by the NHS, does the dentist provide a free service?

Newspapers and Yellow Pages are full of advertisements by solicitors offering free initial interviews, but you never see any from any other profession or trades. Yours sincerely, JAMES P. HORAN Stockport, Lancashire 5 October

### Labour's lead on the network

From Mr Chris Smith, MP

Sir: Your leading article "Labour dials a wrong number" (5 October) correctly identified the most important group whose interests ought to be considered in the development of policy for the information superhighway as being the consumers. This is precisely why the Labour Party – in line with the trade and industry select committee of the Commons – has adopted its proposal for a measured entry for BT and others into the cable markets.

Your leader writer appears to believe that the only prize achieved for the consumer by Labour's approach would be the commitment to put a link into every school, library, college and hospital. This is, indeed, a valuable prize, but it is not the only gain that we seek to achieve. Our most important aim is to achieve a genuinely nationwide network of broad-band communication links covering the whole country. In addition to this, we want to ensure a truly competitive environment in the future for the provision both of infrastructure and of services across the networks.

These would be real gains for the consumer and I am surprised that the *Independent* should dismiss them so lightly. Yours sincerely, CHRIS SMITH MP for Islington South and Finsbury (Lab) Brighton Conference Centre Brighton, 6 October The writer is Shadow Heritage Secretary

### Golden days for men of letters

From Mr E. Paul

Sir: With regard to your letters about the "myth" of the *New Statesman's* golden age (6 October), I read the *New Statesman* from the war until the middle Seventies, but how much of this period fell within the publication's "golden age" I am not able to say.

The golden aspect of the *New Statesman* for me, a product of a pre-war elementary school – never rising above the middle of the class in merit – was to see my letters sharing the correspondence columns with world statesmen and other eminent men and women. The gold was tarnished when I had a letter placed directly below one from Bertrand Russell, whom I admired more for his philosophical thought than for his erratic political opinions.

Paul Johnson favoured my letters most during the time I took the *New Statesman*: perhaps in view of his move to the right, it was because my political views were grounded in my experience in the community, and owed nothing to left-wing dogma or intellectual theorising. Faithfully, E. PAUL London, SW16 6 October

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret that we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

### Buying into education

From Professor Brian Simon

Sir: Andrew Marr's contention ("Egalitarians vs angry parents" 5 October) that the number of people who "buy themselves out" of comprehensive education has risen enormously will not wash. About 500,000 children have attended private schools consistently over the past 40 years and more. Forty years ago, were these "buying themselves out" of the tripartite system with its 1,000-plus glorious grammar schools?

When Marr says that the real question for supporters of state education is to "bring them back", the answer must be – they were never there. This is, admittedly, the cancer at the heart of the English educational system, and needs to be dealt with with determination. But in no way whatsoever is it due to comprehensive education.

Yours sincerely, BRIAN SIMON Emeritus Professor University of Leicester Leicester 6 October

From Mr Mervyn Jones Sir: I cannot agree with Andrew Marr that repudiation of comprehensive schools is "the norm" for middle-class parents. I am middle class. I guess, my three children went to comprehensive schools in south-east London in the Sixties, supposedly the heyday of the "weekly experiment", and emerged as well-educated people. In the Eighties, I was a governor of a north London comprehensive. It was, and is, a good school. Four of my grandchildren are at comprehensives, one at Brighton and three in Dyfed. They are getting a good education and the eldest has achieved high A-levels and a university place. I know the limitations of anecdotal evidence, but this is surely a pretty good spread of experience.

Yours sincerely, MERVYN JONES London, SW1 5 October

### Keegan's way

From Mr Mike Elrick

Sir: Contrary to the assertion in Wilkes' diary (6 October), Kevin Keegan did not score an "own goal" on football admission prices while visiting the Labour Party conference. And, for the record, neither did he attend the conference merely as a publicity stunt to help out the leader of the Labour Party, as implied in your column.

Rather, Kevin, as an ambassador for the game, was and always will be on the side of the thousands of dedicated fans who go through the turnstiles of the nation's football grounds. His comments on the nationwide disparities in ticket prices reflected genuine concern from fans across the country about the costs associated with the game. Does that make him left-wing? I think not.

Mr Keegan is not at the back and call of any political party – he does, however, love the game of football and will travel to speak to any audience to share his informed opinions about that game. Yours sincerely, MIKE ELRICK PR Manager Newcastle United FC Newcastle-upon-Tyne 6 October

### Working too hard – and at what cost?

From Ms Vanessa Schepers

Sir: It was interesting to read the article of Helen Wilkinson asserting that "long hours in a demanding job can ruin relationships" ("His love been lost to labour?" 6 October) and, in the same paper, of the suppression of Professor Cary Cooper's study, which linked long hours of work with heart disease ("Paper on health risk of 48-hour week pulled" 7). It is not only those who are carving out a career who desire greater flexibility and understanding from their workplace.

The younger generation may want to spend more time with their families, but many of them have yet to discover that they will not be in a position to make their own life-enhancing decisions. For the majority, returning to work after having a family means returning to a lower-skilled job and finding that child care is both expensive and over-subscribed.

It is the male manual workers who have the longest hours – on average 45 hours, compared with 39 hours for non-manual male workers – with lorry drivers, among others, clocking up 50-hour weeks (no doubt maintaining contact with long-distance phone calls and snatched weekends away). While women's pay averages only 70 per cent of men's, it is little wonder that their male partners continue to take all the overtime they can get while the woman remains the primary carer.

Britain is growing more and more divided, with an increase in both dual-earner families and non-earner families. This is not only threatening the health of the individual and the health of the family, but also the health of the economy. Surely what is needed is a representative group to call for a national minimum wage, properly contracted hours of work and a subsidised network of quality childcare. Now, where could you find those?

Yours faithfully, VANESSA SCHEPERS Director Working for Children, London, N7

### Ecstasy's unknown dangers

From Mr John Ramsey

Sir: I am a toxicologist who developed Tiscate, the tablet and capsule identification system used by British healthcare and law enforcement professionals.

Your crime correspondent Jason Bennett, in reporting and commenting on the tragic death of Daniel Ashton ("Boy's Ecstasy death sparks drugs alert", 30 September) resulting from his use of Ecstasy, is in danger of misleading other users of the risks they run. There is, to my knowledge, no evidence that any earlier deaths (50, according to Mr Bennett) have resulted from impurities in Ecstasy. It seems that, for some reason which we do not understand, some users die after consuming the same drug that many others take without coming to immediate harm. It is well recognised that heat stress is an important factor. This case is unusual, but not unprecedented, in that it involves three youngsters.

Ecstasy is most commonly supplied as tablets containing about 100mg of one of the drugs MDMA, MDEA or MDA. Only MDMA has ever been made by the legitimate pharmaceutical industry, and then at a time when safety requirements were much lower than they are now. It is not possible for tablets to contain more than double the usual dose without making them physically bigger and there is no evidence that deaths have been related to larger than usual doses.

### Oodles prevail

From Mr Stephen Pollard

Sir: Being required to work in grams and centimetres for formal processes need not stop us using whatever quantities we find most convenient for daily life – or calling them what we want.

In France, we *doisaine* remains a handy way of saying "quite a few" (and is much comelier than *discrete*); in your local brasserie you do not order your beer by the centilitre, still less by the millilitre, but instead ask for *un demi* (originally half a litre,

now often 25cl or about half a pint); and if you ask for *une litre* of meat in the butcher's, you will get half a kilo – or just over a pound.

Moreover, not only does the legislation allow us to go on using the pint of beer and the imperial mile, it leaves unscathed the traditional British units of quantity – the pot, the lashing and the oodle. Yours sincerely, STEPHEN POLLARD Tunbridge Wells, Kent 5 October



# comment

## Boswell's version of Jolson's life

There is a new musical based on the Al Jolson story coming soon, and to coincide with it they are reissuing a revised version of Michael Freedland's 1972 book on the great man.

I have looked through the Freedland book and it seems a fair enough account of his life to me. However, it cannot pretend to compare with the greatest book ever written in this area. I refer, of course, to that enduring classic of biography, *Boswell's Life of Jolson*.

Sadly, I find that many people these days honour this book more by mentioning it than by reading it so, for all those who, to their own detriment, have never tested the delights of *Boswell's Life of Jolson*, I bring you a few enticing morsels today.

From time to time (writes Boswell) I managed to induce Jolson to talk of his childhood in Russia, a country he remembered with clarity though with little affection. "Russia is a country whose size you can hardly comprehend without having been there," he told me. "It is so large that when a tsar died, it took ows of his death several weeks to reach every corner of the empire, and during that time we Jews would go indoors and hide."

I asked him what the reason was for this. "Why, sir, out of sheer terror. You must know that Russians veer between gloom and exultation. On the occasion of the death of a tsar, they were at first in despair, but then so overjoyed at the accession of another one that they would turn a Jewish village down."

I asked him if this were not a curious form of celebration. "Not if you are a Russian, sir. A nation which can burn down its own capital in the face of Napoleon's troops would have no trouble in burning down a small Jewish village just to let off steam. However, my parents found it a strain living in such a volatile place so they determined to find a new life in the Promised Land."

Meaning Israel? "No, sir, not Israel. That was not to become the Promised Land for a long time yet. Or, rather, it was already the Promised Land but only because the European allies had promised it to so many countries. It had been promised to the Jews, and the Arabs, and the French and the Egyptians and, for all I know, the Welsh. Yes, you could call it the Promised Land."

At which the great man laughed, and wrote the remark down, then went solemn again. "No, sir, the United States was the promised land, with no Cossacks and where they did not burn down Jewish villages every time a president left office. It was not paved with gold, but at least it was paved."

I dared to broach the subject of Jolson's stage attire and his habit of applying burnt cork to his face in the so-called act of blacking up. Did not this, I ventured to ask, constitute an offence to black people?

"Offend black people, sir? The contrary! They must be flattered that I should bother to imitate them! Since when has imitation been an insult? Is a king offended when an actor dresses up as Macbeth? How many womeo are offended when a man dresses up as a pantomime dame? Should I, as a man, feel affronted when I see a chimpanzee dressed in human clothes? No, sir! I might be sorry for the chimpanzee, but not for myself."

"You must remember that when I appeared on stage, I did not come before the public fully blackened. I carried my make-up box with me and then, in the course of my performance, applied the black make-up until I had assumed my pose, but because they had seen me create the illusion, it remained an illusion for the audience. They did not think of me as a black man. They thought of me as a white man taking on another identity, whose colour happened to be ebony. This was Brechtian before Brecht arrived."

I asked the great man if he perceived too irony in the fact that he constantly sang of Dixie and the dear old Southland and being way down on the levee, although these were places he had not grown up in and probably not even visited.

"What would you have me do, sir?" growled Jolson. "Sing of Russia's steppes and the endless Mongolian vistas? I had grown up there, but saw no advantage in advertising the fact in song. I sang of dear old Dixie, and cornbread and cottonfields because that is what they wanted to hear. We catered into a compact together to share nostalgia for a past that had never existed. We created an illusion and what is art if not an illusion?"

Is it not a search for the truth? "Nay, sir," said Jolson. "There is no such thing as the truth, only different truths for us to choose from. And the one that concerns me is the fact that I am the greatest. And I shall go on being so."



MILES KINGSTON

On the eve of Conservative Party conference, Alan Howarth explains his decision to join Labour

## 'The party has given up on fairness'

A long list we have a political party in Britain that is both committed to social justice and tough-minded about the practicalities of government. That is why I have joined new Labour.

The ethical core of socialism has always attracted me, since as a student I was moved by reading Tawney's *Equality*. I was inspired by the generosity of vision that I found, the passionate concern for justice, the belief in the benign possibilities of the state, the optimism for humanity. When first entitled to vote, in 1966, I voted Labour.

Later, however, there were too many features of British socialism that I could not agree with. Central planning and large-scale bureaucracy presupposed a capacity on the part of the gentleman in Whitehall to know best - which experience showed he did not have. Public ownership too often failed to provide a worthwhile accountability to the people whose lives were so importantly affected by those concentrations of economic power. While the case for redistribution of wealth and power remained, and remains, valid, a politics predicated on class antagonism seemed to me too often negative and to exacerbate divisions in society unhappily.

I responded to Margaret Thatcher's project because of her challenge to inherited orthodoxies and the establishment, her courage and her moral courage. Thatcher's fervour proved, however, to lack generosity. Her crusade to cast off the shackles of big government became a licence for Darwinian individualism. Her radicalism hardened into an intolerant new orthodoxy. Her heirs practise either a listless pastiche of Thatcherism or a ferocious caricature of it.

With the honourable exceptions of a handful of beleaguered ministers and backbenchers, today's Conservative Party has, in effect, given up on the basic ethical responsibilities of government: to promote fairness and to hold society together.

An unpleasant ideology - a Little Englander, Anglicanism, neo-fascist hostility to the state and adulatory of the strong, while contemptuous of the weak and the outsider - is capturing the Conservative Party. We have seen the effects of it in practical policy terms this year in the cuts in invalidity benefit and unemployment benefit, the Government's refusal to legislate comprehensive civil rights for disabled people and the harsh treatment of women prisoners and asylum seekers.

Meanwhile, new Labour has discarded the policies of the Seventies that make no sense for the Nineties, and is embracing new practical means to apply its enduring ethical values. New Labour has seized the ground of "one nation" politics that the Conservative Party has abandoned. In his address to the Labour Party conference, Tony Blair spoke of socialism as a belief in society, in co-operation, in achieving together what we are unable to achieve alone. I tried to say the same thing when I challenged Michael Portillo, in debate on the Jobseeker's Bill in January, to recollect that we are members one of another.

On issue after issue over the past three years, since I left the Government, I have found myself arguing the same case as Labour.

It is an illusion for Conservatives to suppose that making the rich richer will make the poor richer. The trickle-down theory has not worked, and if ministers could release themselves from intellectual autopilot, they would recognise that. The Rowntree Inquiry into Income and Wealth, soberly and with academic scrupulousness, documents the widening inequality in Britain and the unhappiness and costs that



Alan Howarth finds the politics he wanted. Caters News Agency

come with it. When these issues were debated in Parliament earlier this year, the Government organised systematic barking from the back benches and rubbished the integrity of one of the report's authors.

The orchestrated vilification by ministers of single mothers at the Conservative Party conference in 1993 was one of the most shameful episodes I can recall in British politics.

Similarly, the Government

has refused to be open-minded about the minimum wage and seeks to discredit it through scaremongering. Its opposition to the Social Chapter is based out on intelligent analysis of what its effects would be, but on fear and exploitation of anti-European sentiment in Britain. That is the reverse of responsible leadership.

Labour is right to advocate a minimum wage on moral and economic grounds. The minimum wage is the bottom line of decency. It is not decent for the Government to allow privatised utility directors windfall fortunes and go on to abolish capital gains tax and inheritance tax, having themselves abolished minimum wages set by Wages Councils. It is imprudent, as well as cruel, to degrade our workforce by encouraging pay cuts. It is crazy, more than ever in a knowledge-based economy, to cut public expenditure on training and to refuse to fund schools adequately.

Employers and government alike need to nurture and develop our labour force so we go upmarket in our skills and more of our people are able to operate successfully in the global economy.

The Treasury's obsessive negativism, the Government's fetish about reducing public expenditure as a proportion of GDP, and Conservative backbenchers' desperation to ingratiate themselves with voters through tax cuts conspire to prevent the investment we need in public services. Tony Blair and Gordon Brown are right to insist that disciplined management of the economy and the proper funding of public services - the health service, education - should have precedence over tax cuts. We cannot accept that the affluent should have an electoral veto on constructive fiscal policy.

The Labour Party under-

stands the urgent need to restore pluralism and accountability if the quality of our democracy is to be restored. Conservatives used to criticise Labour for its tendency to centralise power. This Conservative government has systematically opposed and stripped down every alternative centre of authority. The Government debilitates our democratic culture by capping the revenue-raising and expenditure powers of elective local government while proliferating its own patronage through quangos.

Transnational economic power will increasingly require competent transnational institutions of government. Statesmanship would encourage trust in sensibly remodelled European institutions rather than surrender to xenophobic prejudice.

A rational government would want freedom of information to enable less trivial and more thorough democratic debate. Ministers not possessed with executive arrogance would not repeatedly fall foul of the judges and, so far from railing petulantly against the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, would incorporate the Convention into our domestic law.

Conservatives should realise, as Labour does, the dangerous extent of disillusion with politics. The Government should not allow their back benches to scupper Nolan. They should agree on a legislative programme to restore checks and balances and pluralism to our democracy.

The Labour Party led by Blair and John Prescott offers Britain a new politics of generosity and inclusiveness, of realism, that appeals to our better nature. It is the politics I have long wanted and now found.

The writer is MP for Stratford-on-Avon.

In interview, Donald Macintyre gauges the reaction of the Tory chairman, Brian Mawhinney

## 'This is all much ado about nothing'

If anyone can rise to the unpalatable task of being the first Tory chairman in memory to lose an MP to the main Opposition party 18 months - at most - away from an election, it could yet be Brian Mawhinney. He was no doubt tempted on Saturday, as he hastily covered the Tory flank exposed by Howarth's momentous decision, to reach for something a little stronger than the Lucozade for which he has a passion. For as he prepares for this week's party conference he faces a challenge of the order that his predecessor Jeremy Hanley never faced in his worst nightmares.

The case Mawhinney laid out yesterday, on Day One of the aftermath, was typically robust. In a pointed gibe at Howarth's serial political monogamy, he sniped that Howarth had switched from Labour support mingled with admiration for the one-nation Toryism of Butler and Macmillan to deep-eyed Thatcherism, only to end up switching to Labour allegedly because the Tories had become too right-wing.

Howarth had discussed his doubts with everyone except John Major, and in the ultimate snub to the voters of Stratford he wasn't even prepared to offer himself up to them by calling a by-election.

A "totally relaxed" Mawhinney told the *Independent* yesterday this defection would have "no effect" on the agenda the party will unveil this week - a packed series of policy announcements "which will affect millions of people in contrast to Alan Howarth's, which affects only him. He represents William Shakespeare's birthplace and this is really Much Ado about Nothing. The more we learn about the reasoning that lies

behind the decision the more apparent it is that it was not only profoundly wrong but bizarre."

But hadn't Mr Howarth's decision tapped into a simmering discontent on the Tory left of which Mr Major now had to take account? Of course, Mawhinney said, there were a "range of emphases" in the Tory party, "but there is also basic agreement on the values and philosophies which we are pursuing. I heard Jim Lester [a prominent voice on the pro-European, one-nation left of the party] saying exactly that on the radio today."

Lester had said, Mawhinney added, what was certainly true, that no MP was now going to follow Howarth across the Commons floor. It was precisely because of the vigorous debate which existed within the Conservative Party that "we are setting the agenda, and that's why you started to hear echoes of that agenda from the Labour conference last week. But that's got nothing to do with this eccentric decision to join the Labour Party."

Of the central message of Howarth's defection - that Labour can now claim to be the party of one nation - he said: "The idea that by joining the party of Dennis Skinner, Tony Benn and John Prescott you are somehow promoting the politics of consensus will provoke a horse laugh through the whole country."

And so, he would not be changing a word of the speech with which he will open the conference tomorrow. The Tory chairman will not discuss the contents of that speech, but colleagues say one element in it will be a section on Europe, designed to set the Tories' nationalistic campaigning tone between now and the election.



Brian Mawhinney: a robust case. Photograph: Edward Sykes

Howarth will do doubt see this as underlining his worst fears. The Liberal Democrats, Dr Mawhinney is expected to say, are the federalists, Labour Party the centralisers, and the

froot-rank politicians. It is a quality that may serve him well in this latest crisis. He knows, for instance, exactly how to find the Opposition's jugular. He is almost certainly correct in identifying the Labour confusion over rail privatisation as the most obvious weakness of last week's Labour conference. This "was a classic example of the gap between rhetoric and reality" which it has been his job to expose for three months, a task which now acquires a new sense of urgency.

Howarth's defection - reducing at a stroke the Government's majority from seven to five - suddenly raises the spectre of a 1996 election. Can the party handle that? "We will be ready to go whenever the Prime Minister says to go."

Will they? If you ask about the number of party members or their lamentable age profile - the estimated average age of the rank and file is over 60 - he comes close to dismissing the question as an irrelevance. He claims that membership is 700,000 to 750,000 and that "anecdotally" the experience of constituency chairmen he encounters on his travels is that "people are signing up in numbers they find encouraging."

While you can't verify these figures, of course, because there is no central membership register, the wetish Bow Group has plumped for a figure less than half Dr Mawhinney's. But he replies briskly that he doesn't have time to spend on "a lengthy analysis of historical trends of membership."

The reportedly dire state of Tory party funds is certainly not irrelevant, but here he is laconic to the point of obscurity. First, he insists that Major's success in the leadership election has helped to release a new flow of

funding. "Smith Square sends out letters inviting people to make contributions straight into here. I signed such a letter soon after my arrival [in July] and it has produced the biggest response in the history of that particular technique."

Can he say how big? "No."

Since the party has an £11m overdraft, with the Royal Bank of Scotland pressing for repayment, isn't it going to have a problem paying for the election? He insists that "when the time comes we will have the troops and the support and the backup and resources we need" but nevertheless acknowledges: "We can always do with more money."

So are the Tories diverting their healthy running surplus of £2.6m last year to a special election fund like that of Labour, which is now boasting a £4.5m election fund? "The answer is that there is a lot of differences between us and the Labour Party and one is that if I had such a fund I wouldn't tell you about it nor would I tell you how much is in it."

Mawhinney manages to radiate a bullish - and apparently genuine - optimism about the Tories' prospects. "I'm very confident that the instincts of the British people have not changed. I know the instincts of the Government and the party haven't changed. And it's becoming increasingly clear that the instincts of the Labour Party haven't changed."

When he speaks tomorrow, Mawhinney will have to persuade his party, against all the odds, to share his confidence to overcome the enormous challenge the Howarth defection has posed to all three of these propositions. If he does, he will already have proved his worth as chairman.

## Good-bye battery



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## Generation Why

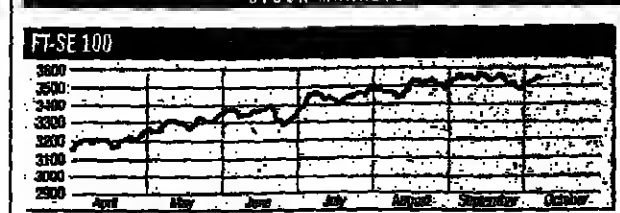


by Tony Reeve and Steve Way



## MARKET SUMMARY

## STOCK MARKETS

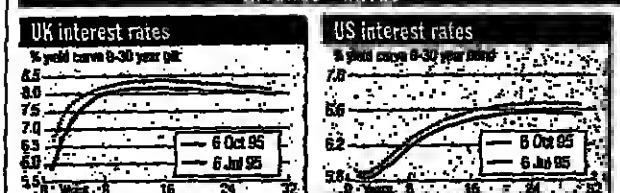


Index	Close	Week's chg	Change (%)	12 Mth High	12 Mth Low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	2826.5	18.3	0.5	3070.8	2943.4	4.0
FTSE 250	3879.0	30.2	0.8	3897.3	3300.9	3.5
FTSE 350	1784.4	10.1	0.6	1778.3	1477.0	3.9
FT Small Cap	1576.6	6.2	0.3	1593.1	1476.5	3.3
FT All Share	1743.4	9.7	0.6	1757.6	1465.2	3.9
New York	4782.7	-26.4	-0.6	4801.8	3674.6	2.4
Tokyo	18506.3	593.2	3.3	20148.8	14486.4	0.8
Hong Kong	9573.9	227.6	2.4	9940.0	8987.9	3.3
Frankfurt	2171.4	-15.8	-0.7	2217.0	1911.0	1.9
Paris	1808.8	21.2	1.2	2017.3	1721.6	3.8
Milan	9754.0	-157.0	-1.6	10911.0	9266.0	2.0

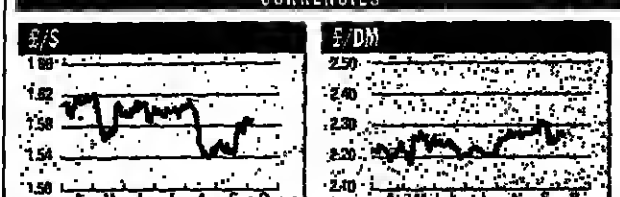
## MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Index	FTSE 350 companies	Week's chg	Change (%)	12 Mth High	12 Mth Low	Yield (%)
Boddington	389.5	123.5	46.43	389.5	389.5	3.5
Armstrong	278	33.5	13.7	278	278	3.5
Telegraph House	31	10.7	34.52	31	31	3.5
M&G Group	1235	107	8.5	1235	1235	3.5
Wm & A	470	38	8.3	470	470	3.5

## INTEREST RATES



## CURRENCIES



Pound vs.	Close	Week's chg	Yr Ago
\$ (London)	1.5815	+0.10	1.5880
\$ (New York)	1.5830	-0.13c	1.5880
DM (London)	2.2546	-0.46p	2.4526
Yen (London)	159.49	+Y2.76	158.40
£ Index	85.1	+0.4	89.1

## OTHER INDICATORS

OTHER INDICATORS							
	Close	Week's chg	Yr Ago	Index	Latest	Yr Ago	Next Figs
Oil Brent \$	15.76	-\$1.36	16.85	RPI	149.9	3.6pc	2.2 12 Oct
Gold \$	383.00	-\$1.25	391.80	GDP	-	2.8pc	4.1 -
Gold £	242.18	-0.31	246.73	Base Rates	-	6.75pc	5.25 -

Source: Datastream

## IN BRIEF

## North West set to raise Norweb bid

North West Water is this week expected to increase the bidding to win control of Norweb, the regional electricity company. Sources said that North West's board, headed by Sir Desmond Pither, would meet early this week to vote on raising its current cash and paper terms worth £11.12 per Norweb share.

Some analysts said North West might have to pitch a fresh offer at around £12 a share to win both the recommendation of Norweb's board and to defeat the rival £10.85 cash bid on the table from Texas Energy Partners.

## Exchange guidelines for watchdogs

The Stock Exchange is to publish guidelines for industry regulators governing how they should release price-sensitive information to the marketplace, writes Mary Fagan. The move would be the first public attempt to influence the actions of the watchdogs, and follows mounting concern over the power of the regulators and leaks earlier this year of price-sensitive information about regulation of electricity companies. The Exchange has no jurisdiction over the regulators. There is no suggestion that there will be any effort to intrude into regulators' decisions, only how those decisions are communicated to the outside world.

## PIA may rule against levy

The Personal Investment Authority, the financial services regulator, may rule out a compulsory levy on products as a way of solving the cash crisis of the Investors Compensation Scheme. The regulator, which last month contributed a £16m levy to the compensation scheme, is set to issue a discussion document on how it should be funded.

## Lloyds 'prepared to spend £3bn'

Lloyds Bank is rumoured to be on the acquisition trail, prepared to spend up to £3bn to expand further in the UK financial services market. According to weekend press reports, it had approached Bradford & Bingley, the building society, which was rebuffed. The bank is advised by ING Barings, which is believed to be reviewing takeover options. The bank yesterday had no comment on the reports.

## GEC draws up Weinstock shortlist

GEC, the electrical and electronics company, confirmed over the weekend it was drawing up a shortlist of external and internal executives to replace Lord Weinstock, its managing director, who is to retire next year after 33 years. Lord Prior, the company chairman, said the successor would be named within six months. Some investors are keen to see the company recruit from the outside rather than see Lord Weinstock, who is 71, be succeeded by his son Simon, who is commercial director.

## Advisers boost home loans

Financial advisers increased the number of home loans they arrange by 7.6 per cent in the three months to the end of September, a survey by HomeLoans Direct reveals. The survey also shows that advisers, who now place about 50 per cent of all mortgage transactions in the UK, expect business to increase in the next three months.

## Consumers favour credit

Up to 85 per cent of people believe credit is an acceptable tool if properly managed, says a survey by Beneficial Bank, the UK arm of US-based financial services company. More than 50 per cent believe personal loans are a sensible way of borrowing, with three in five being more likely to buy something if they can do so with interest-free credit. Among the most likely purchases on credit are cars, fridges, washing machines, TVs, videos and furniture.

Chirac's commitment to maintaining strong French currency set for severe test

# Franc facing 'crunch' day on exchanges

STEPHEN JESSEL in Paris  
PAUL WALLACE in London  
DIANE COYLE in Washington

The French franc is expected to come under further assault in the foreign exchange markets today after the pummeling it took on Friday.

"This is the crunch point," said Peter Spencer, professor of financial economics at Birkbeck College, London, and an expert on European monetary developments. "Once the market has a currency in its sights, an assault is likely to continue," he added.

The attack on the currency looks like developing into a major test of President Chirac's commitment to the "franc fort" policy, developed under François Mitterrand, of linking the franc to the German mark with the ultimate ambition of entering monetary union in 1999. The Banque de France is likely to be forced to raise interest rates to defend the franc.

However, with the economy weakening and unemployment rising in August, such a step would run counter to President Chirac's objective of creating

700,000 new jobs by the end of next year.

"An aggressive and prolonged defence of the franc using interest rates is unlikely," Julian Jessop, European economist at HSBC Markets, said.

French political leaders yesterday attacked the actions by currency speculators, and reaffirmed their intention to cut the budget deficit to meet the Maastricht criteria for economic convergence and European economic and monetary union.

"I do not want to cut the deficits to please the markets or those I shall call the London gnomes," Alain Juppé, the French Prime Minister, told an RPR party meeting in Avignon. "We must be at the rendezvous of the strong... those countries which refuse to let things slide... and at the great rendezvous which Europe has set for the end of the century."

Speaking in Washington, where he was attending the meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors of the G7, Jean Arthuis, the Finance Minister, blamed speculators "who take their money

and run" for Friday's assault on the franc, when it lost five centimes against the German mark.

However, Kenneth Clarke, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is also at the G7 meeting, said: "Markets make their judgements on the fundamentals of economic performance." Referring to the blame heaped on the "gnomes of London", he said, jokingly, "it used to be the gnomes of Zurich. London is the main foreign exchange centre in the world... but they are international market makers."

Economists believe that the scope for France to successfully defend the franc against a further, and sustained, assault by currency speculators is limited.

Mr Jessop said: "An aggressive and prolonged defence of the franc using interest rates is unlikely. The central bank has only been able to sell the 'franc fort' to the politicians on the basis that it means lower interest rates. If interest rates actually have to be raised to defend the currency, the game is up."

There is no doubt that the French franc is too high and real interest rates are too high. The French economy could grow



Gaullist resistance: Alain Juppé, French Prime Minister, is not out to please the markets  
Photograph: Reuters

much more strongly without rekindling inflation if it was released from the straitjacket of the 'franc fort' policy."

Slow growth in the economy is making it difficult for France to bring down the budget deficit from its current level of 5 per cent to the 3 per cent level in 1997 that is one of the condi-

tions of the Maastricht Treaty for eligibility to monetary union.

This week's strike of civil servants against the government's proposed pay freeze shows the difficulties Mr Juppé is facing in convincing the markets that the French are willing to swallow the fiscal medicine necessary to achieve EMU.

# G7 intends to underpin the dollar

DIANE COYLE  
Washington

Currency markets were sent a clear signal yesterday of the intention of the leading industrialised nations to underpin the dollar.

At the meeting of the Group of Seven industrial countries in Washington, finance ministers welcomed the recent result of intervention by central banks, which reversed the dollar's dramatic tumble against the yen in the early months of this year. The ministers also stressed the need to cut government deficits for the sake of financial market stability.

The meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors from the world's most powerful economies also discussed the economic reconstruction of Bosnia if the peace plans progress. World Bank of-

ficials have held their first meeting to draw up reconstruction proposals.

The G7 countries want the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to take the lead in the reconstruction process, building on their experience in Rwanda, Haiti, Cambodia and elsewhere. This weekend's meeting did not reach any conclusions about how much aid would be needed, but ministers said the burden should be shared between Europe, the US, Japan and Muslim countries.

The communiqué highlighted the G7's commitment to preventing the dollar from falling against the yen again. It welcomed the "orderly reversal" in movements of major currencies that had taken place since their April meeting.

The US currency touched an all-time low of Yen 79.85 to the dollar at the end of April. It has since regained most of the lost ground, thanks mainly to co-ordinated intervention by the US, Japanese and German central banks in mid-August.

This weekend's communiqué

check only by traders' fear of further central bank intervention. The US currency remains well above its low point but has been unable so far to stay above the psychologically important level of Yen 100 to the dollar.

The ministers welcomed America's progress in moving towards cutting its government budget deficit and the Japanese government's moves to revive the flagging economy.

Last week the International Monetary Fund warned that there was a strong risk of more financial market instability if governments - in Europe as well as the US - did not make good progress on cutting budget deficits.

Kenneth Clarke, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said yesterday:



World Bank and IMF



# Europe acts to nip cable 'abuses'

MATHEW HORSMAN

The European Commission has launched an investigation into plans by three telecom operators, including Ireland's Telecom Eireann (TE), to expand into cable television.

The competition directorate in Brussels has sent "requests for information" to TE, Telefonica and Telecom Italia, to determine whether their plans constitute an "abuse of a dominant position". Last week, it announced a review of Telecom Italia's privileged position in the mobile phone market.

The EC is intent on preventing monopoly telecom operators from dominating the emerging markets for multimedia, fearing that the lack of competition will reduce consumer choice and lead to higher prices for services.

The drive to protect new entrants to the market comes as

TE holds a monopoly for the use of the Irish State-owned telecommunications network infrastructure and a dominant position for telecommunications services in Ireland. Given TE's position as a network operator and Cablelink's position as a CATV services provider, a possible opening of TE's network to Cablelink raises concerns under Article 86 EC Treaty (i.e. abuse of a dominant position).

An extract from the Brussels competition directorate's 'request for information'

existing players seek to retain their dominance. BT last week reached a deal with the Labour Party to allow it access to the broadcasting market, in return for supplying fibre-optic connections for public institutions at no cost. It is also rumoured to be in talks with Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation about a joint venture to broadcast multimedia services on BT's domestic network.

The Commission's concern about TE's cable aspirations follows the announcement that the

Irish operator was raising its stake in Cablelink, the leading cable company, from 60 per cent to 75 per cent. Cablelink is considering using TE's phone network to expand broadcast capacity. The Commission fears the plan would limit competition in the Irish cable market.

The EC recently adopted a directive aimed at liberalising the market in 1996 for certain "non-reserved" telecom services, including data transmission and video-on-demand. Full liberalisation of the telecom

market is scheduled for 1998. The EC is also concerned about Telefonica's plans in Spain to upgrade its network to allow delivery of multimedia services. Telefonica has a joint venture with Prisa, the country's largest publishing and pay-TV company, to develop new direct-to-home services.

Telecom Italia is also developing a fibre-optic network capable of carrying telecom and broadcasting services, spending \$7.8bn to connect 50 per cent of Italian homes by 1998.

# Bruised Apple faces harsh facts

DAVID USBORNE  
New York

Increasingly lonely in its battle against the monolithic Microsoft Corporation and hurt by a spate of supply and manufacturing problems, Apple Computer is being forced to consider whether it can survive as an independent company.

The issue was suddenly thrust into public debate last week, when Apple's respected chief financial officer, Joseph Gratziano, announced his resignation after he failed to persuade the company's board that the time had come for Apple to sell itself.

The most obvious potential suitor for the company would be IBM, which made a first approach last summer. Earlier this year, however, Big Blue spent \$3.5bn (£2.3bn) on its acquisition of the Lotus Development Corporation and may no longer be interested in the increasingly beleaguered Apple.

Rarely have prospects seemed more bleak for Apple, America's third largest maker of personal computers. Last month,

it revealed that because of difficulties keeping up with demand, it was sharply reducing its estimates for revenue and profits in its fourth fiscal quarter.

Also last month, the company was forced to recall some of its Powerbook laptop models after discovering that under some circumstances its battery units could burst into flame. This was on top of the relative flop of its Newton Thinkpad digital organiser.

All the while, Apple has seen its share of the US personal computer market slide to just under 8 per cent. Although some of the slippage has been attributed to management mistakes, the company is continually finding itself up against the brick wall of Microsoft and its Windows operating system.

In an interview with the *New York Times*, Apple's chief executive, Michael Spindler, attempted to douse the speculation of a merger, but at the same time indicated that, to survive, the company would have to consider alliances with other companies as well as some rationalisation of its operations.

— with IBM, for example, in the development of the Power PC chip — could be deepened, Mr Spindler remarked. "The big question is, how will we stand together?" As to restructuring, he went on: "There are crucial decisions that are going to have to be made about letting go of some parts of a business that are quite unerving to some people, including ourselves."

Mr Spindler was not coy about Apple's problems, which in recent days have helped push its stock price down to around \$36, nearly half the \$65.5 it reached three years ago. "This has been the most difficult quarter in our history," he conceded. "Give us one strong quarter and all this will go away."

With the Christmas season approaching, Apple might indeed overcome the worst in the next few months. Any short-term pick-up in sales, however, will do nothing to answer the more fundamental question of how the company is going to endure when large corporations, in particular, are shunning its products in favour of systems designed for Microsoft Windows.

# Drive to help UK firms invest abroad

PETER RODGERS  
Business Editor

Anthony Nelson, the trade minister, is to shift policy towards greater emphasis on direct investment abroad by British companies and boosting the City's invisible export earnings. As well as the traditional roles of promoting exports and encouraging foreign companies to invest in Britain, the Department of Trade and Industry will step up efforts to remove barriers to overseas capital investments made from the UK.

Mr Nelson also plans to put more time into helping the City sell its fee-earning services abroad, including a visit next month to Jakarta, where up to £600m of advisory work on Indonesian privatisations is expected to be up for grabs by international securities firms. The City team will be led by Robin Fox of Kleinwort Benson.

In an interview with the *Independent*, Mr Nelson described as simplistic the idea that only visible export earnings mattered. He wanted to look at the capital account of the balance of payments as well — which meant inward and outward investment and repatriation of dividends and profits.

Mr Nelson said he was very pleased that there were 230 Japanese companies with manufacturing plants here. But he also wanted to encourage British companies' foreign direct investment which would provide income for the UK.

It was assumed politically that outward investment must be high because it did not show faith in investment in British industry. However, capital profits on investment abroad were "big ticket business", representing £9bn of Britain's £50bn gross annual income from visible, invisible and capital account trade with the US, where UK investment was £119bn.

Mr Nelson said there was a good case for healthy capital account trade as well as outward investment to the UK. "If you are minister of trade you ought to be looking at the whole profit and loss account, and not just part of it."

His efforts would be directed principally at trying to open markets such as South Korea, where there were tight restrictions on investment by UK companies, working both through bilateral agreements and through bodies such as the World Trade Organisation.

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GAVYN DAVIES

"What is clearly needed almost everywhere is a large tightening in fiscal policy with a simultaneous easing in monetary policy"

## A mountain of reasons to reduce public debt

Jerusalem cannot be built on a mountain of debt, Gordon Brown told the Labour Party conference last week, to surprisingly little dissent from the floor. But the rest of the world, it seems, is less willing to accept this truth. Public debt has now been rising remorselessly for more than two decades in the developed countries, and this has resulted in a sharp increase in global real interest rates.

Although the UK has been a notable exception to the general rule of rising debt, we have been unable to avoid the adverse consequences of excess borrowing by other countries. Global capital flows mean that each country is now vitally affected by the build-up of debt elsewhere in the world economy – and those countries which are able to control their debt have every right to demand that others do the same.

It has been common in the UK to hear complaints that the budget rules written into the Maastricht Treaty constitute an unwarranted interference in the rights of a sovereign state to set its own tax rates and public-spending policies. But this misses a key point, which will remain true whether or not the European Union ever adopts monetary union. The existence of adverse spill-over effects from one country's debt to another country's real interest rates creates a new right for low-debt nations like the UK to complain about the bad behaviour of others – just as the damaging effects of passive smoking justify new demands that the freedom of the smoker should be curtailed.

For much of the post-war period, economists have found it difficult to prove to governments that excessive budget deficits are necessarily bad for domestic interest rates. One possible reason for this failure was the so-called "Ricardian Equivalence" argument. This essentially states that the private sector will recognise that a build-up in public debt will have to be redeemed sooner or

later through an increase in taxation. Anticipating this, individuals will simply save more whenever budget deficits rise so that they can afford to pay the higher taxes later. The consequent rise in private savings eliminates the adverse effects of higher government borrowing on real interest rates, which are unaffected therefore by budget deficits.

The problem with this argument is that it demands an almost incredible degree of rationality, foresight, and concern about future generations from the person on the Clapham omnibus. Not surprisingly, most studies have found that full Ricardian equivalence does not apply, though some have suggested that changes in private saving do offset about half of the effect of a rise in government borrowing. This should still leave a large adverse effect on real interest rates to be uncovered as governments borrow more.

Why then has this effect been so hard to establish? Most likely, it is because it does not operate within any individual economy, but operates powerfully on a global scale. When a single country increases its budget deficit, it can draw on a huge global pool of savings to finance its increased borrowing, so the adverse effects on interest rates are spread too thinly to be immediately noticeable.

The problem, though, is that this creates an incentive for any individual government to increase its borrowing, since there will be no obvious pain through higher domestic interest rates. As each country responds to this incentive, the build-up in global levels of debt does indeed raise interest rates – but it is in no country's interest to be the first to curtail borrowing, since acting alone will have no effect on global real rates. Hence there is a clear case for supranational policing of excessive deficits.

All this has been mere speculation until recently, but now there is solid evidence which confirms that global real interest rates are strongly related to government borrowing around the world. For example, a recent IMF study by Thomas Haldrup and Robert Westcott finds that global real rates have averaged 1 to 2 per cent in the 1960s and early 1970s, roughly zero from 1973-80, and 3 to 4.5 per cent in the 1981-94 period.

Two factors explain the rise in real rates. First – and harmlessly – the real rate of return on productive private investment has increased, raising the expected return on equities. This has bid up the real yield on competing assets, including bonds. Second, however, the rise in gross government debt has had a massive adverse effect on real rates. According to the IMF study, each 1 percentage point rise in the global debt/GDP ratio increases the long-term real rate of

interest by around 0.1 per cent. Since the late 1970s, the global debt ratio has risen from around 40 per cent to about 75 per cent, which would be enough to account for the vast majority of the rise in real interest rates over this period.

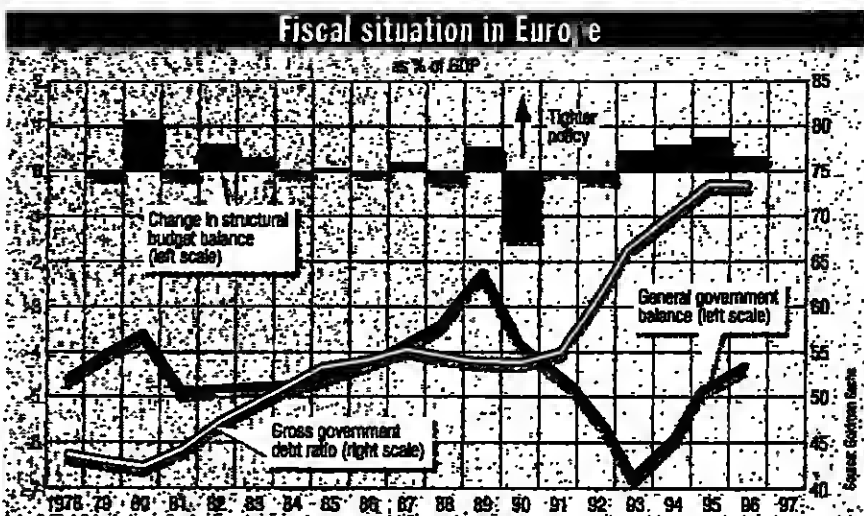
As the graph shows, much of this increase in debt has come in continental Europe. This has happened despite the fact that the underlying fiscal stance, measured by the change in the structural budget balance, has been tightening for much of the past decade – and has done so in each year since 1992. In other words, governments have been willing to raise taxes or cut public spending in an attempt to curtail debt, largely in order to comply with the Maastricht criteria. But only in Britain – ironically a country that does not appear to worry much about hitting the Maastricht criteria for their own sake – has

the budget consolidation been large enough to hold out the promise of a declining debt ratio in the next few years.

Who is to blame for this rise in debt? The orthodox answer is that governments have sought short-term political gains by increasing public spending, but have been unwilling to finance this through tax rises. This is a less orthodox answer is to blame the central bankers themselves. On this argument, interest rates have been held far too high for too long, either because of a desire to hit inflation targets, or to fix the exchange rate inside the ERM. The result has been a prolonged recession, which has automatically raised budget deficits as unemployment has risen.

This debate is a bit chicken-and-eggish. But what is clearly needed almost everywhere is a large tightening in fiscal policy with a simultaneous easing in monetary policy – exactly the mix which the UK has had since 1993. Most countries are officially committed to this mix, but few are actually pursuing it with sufficient rigour, and instead are allowing the global debt ratio to creep inexorably upwards. If they continue to do this, which they probably will, the real interest rate will rise further, and this will crowd out an ever larger number of private investment projects in the developed economies. More unemployment will result.

Ideally, we need a world fiscal authority empowered to enforce a Maastricht Treaty writ large (albeit only in its fiscal manifestation). Only with such a supranational police force – a souped-up IMF – can the adverse consequences of one country's fiscal actions on the well-being of others be properly curtailed. But is that likely? About as likely, I would say, as the election of Eric Cantona as the honorary president of the Crystal Palace supporters' club.



**THE MONDAY INTERVIEW** Sir Iain Vallance, chairman of BT, and Michel Bon, president of France Telecom, stake their claims to reign supreme in the expanding European telecommunications market. Each scents victory, but can they both win?

## BT kept waiting on lines to Europe's free market

There is an air of scepticism whenever Sir Iain Vallance is asked about European liberalisation. Keen as the British Telecom chairman is to embrace the market, the changes he wants implemented have been a long time coming, in spite of the rhetoric in Brussels and worthy words from governments in member states.

BT takes every opportunity to bang the drum for a more open market in Europe. This, he believes, is one of the consolation prizes for being exposed at an early stage to the cold winds of competition on its home ground, even if the telecommunications giant still dominates the UK market.

"The Commission has got the bit between their teeth and that opens up potential opportunities for BT. We have already gone through the 'painful adolescence' of passing from state ownership to private ownership and of liberalisation in the marketplace. We are all set and ready to go."

But according to Sir Iain, no one really knows when competition will really happen. Full competition right across the board, with genuine choice and the level of maturity seen in the UK market, could take 10 years, he said.

The problem from BT's point of view is not so much the in-

roduction of directives on which competition will be based, but the length of time it can take directives to be implemented in national law. Even then, as Sir Iain observes, "They are not necessarily observed."

He added: "In spite of good words about hitting the tarmac

petition directorate charged with making things happen has its heart in the right place but not enough resources in enforcement terms. A key to getting a move on is strengthening of the enforcement arm in enforcement of directives. I am happy with the directives com-

ing up. All the right items are on the agenda. Our concern is not the agenda; it is getting it into national law and getting it enforced. That requires a will and a determination."

He believes that BT and the Government at least are "shoulder to shoulder" in this drive for liberalisation, and that any future Labour administration would also take the same line. In spite of differences between

the two parties on Euro-issues, Sir Iain points out: "This is Treaty of Rome stuff. It predates Maastricht."

From BT's position, it has not only a lot to gain from the ability to compete freely across the continent, it has a lot to give in terms of lessons learnt.

The consensus is that other member states have barely begun to tackle the thorny issue of regulation. Without that there is little point in having an open marketplace, which would be all too easy for dominant players to abuse.

"We need regulation which is independent of government. That is extremely important and it is very difficult to achieve while some public telephone operators are state-owned," Sir Iain said.

"We need a proper licensing process and a proper licensing process. If we had the same interconnection terms across Europe as we have here in the UK we would be laughing. We are not asking for anything pro-competitive. The best we can hope for is something that is not anti-competitive."

He went on: "There are no signs yet of any country in Europe or indeed anywhere else which would lean over so far to encourage competitors as we do in the UK."

Sir Iain rejects the notion that



Sir Iain Vallance: keen to see improvements in the introduction and implementation of competition directives

Europe needs a large and powerful new body along the lines of the UK's own watchdog, Ofcom. Unsurprisingly, he warns against detailed interference in the day-to-day business of the industry – a tendency of which BT accuses Ofcom and constantly rails against.

Sir Iain believes that a Euro Ofcom is not necessary. "The main interest of the Commission should be deregulation."

That is where the supremacy of Brussels over national governments is an imperative.

"Beyond that we need general terms and principles laid down as guidelines. What we must avoid is over-regulation of the detail. Otherwise you get distortion if you get significant differences in regulation in different member states."

MARY FAGAN

### The main global telecoms alliances

<b>Names:</b>	Phoenix
<b>Partners:</b>	Sprint (US long distance operator); France Telecom; Deutsche Telekom
<b>Status:</b>	The two European telcos are still awaiting EC approval for their joint venture. Atlas, the prime vehicle for the two companies' business services, is to join with Sprint to form Phoenix.
<b>Names:</b>	Univert
<b>Partners:</b>	AT&T (US telecoms giant); Unisource (joint venture between the telcos of Spain, Switzerland, Netherlands and Sweden)
<b>Status:</b>	Unisource is still awaiting EC approval. Subsequent link to AT&T subject to regulatory review on both sides of the Atlantic.
<b>Names:</b>	Concert
<b>Partners:</b>	MCI (US long-distance operator); BT
<b>Status:</b>	Up and running. Package of services for business customers is available in Europe through various equity partnerships, joint ventures and alliances in several countries.

with the wheels running there will be some dragging of feet. But directionally it is right – the Commission in Brussels wants it and customers want it.

Some countries interpret directives very narrowly in their own law; others over-interpret. Asked whether the UK falls into the category of the over-zealous, he admits: "In our line of business that is my experience."

Sir Iain's view is that the com-

ing up. All the right items are on the agenda. Our concern is not the agenda; it is getting it into national law and getting it enforced. That requires a will and a determination."

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## Blunt Bon gearing up for good fight

The president's office at mighty France Telecom ought to be equipped with revolving doors. The monopoly has gone through three chief executives in as many weeks since late August, creating uncertainty at corporate headquarters in Paris and threatening the tender negotiations in Brussels over a controversial joint venture with Deutsche Telekom, Germany's telecommunications giant.

Yet despite the disruptions, for France Telecom it may be third time lucky: for the man in place at the end of the day was Michel Bon, 52, a former banker and retailer with public and private sector experience. That mix will be crucial as the company moves toward commercial status, and the task of pleasing political masters, powerful public-sector unions and demanding Brussels regulators.

Over dinner in Geneva last week, Mr Bon, only a month into the job, belied his reputation in the French press as the bland and ineffectual lackey of the powerful post and telecommunications ministry. He was blunt on the key issues facing France Telecom management: the company's commercial status; Atlas, its link with Deutsche Telekom; and the highly competitive telecommunications environment in which he intends to be a key player.

"If I were an investor with some money, I would certainly consider investing in a technology company," he said. "But I wouldn't want to invest in a heavily regulated industry. I



Michel Bon: determined to transform France Telecom into a global business

prefer to see companies in open competition."

And for that to happen, the status of France Telecom must change. Mr Bon said he had received assurances from the French government that the French monopoly, which had revenues last year of FF143.6bn (£17bn), will be transformed into a commercial company.

When? Mr Bon conceded that the timing is up to the government. "It all depends on the regulatory environment," he said. "But if it were up to me, it would be tomorrow."

His comments are eerily reminiscent of one of his predecessors, Marcel Roulet, ousted at the end of August after a month of tense dealings with the telecoms minister, François Fillon. The government of Alain Juppé believed Mr Roulet was moving too quickly, and risked upsetting the public-sector unions at France Telecom.

So how will Mr Bon, equally committed to a private-sector future for his company, manage to hang on to his job and his principles? "In my experience," he said, "you never

do badly if you play to the intelligence of people." He believes the unions will understand the need for change, provided it is discussed openly and with passion.

Nor does he expect huge layoffs as a result of commercialisation, claiming that France Telecom is already more productive than either of the two other large European telecommunications companies, BT or Deutsche Telekom.

In the emerging global market for telecommunications, he intends to remain a serious

contender. Already France Telecom has moved into multimedia businesses such as cable, pay-per-view television, on-line services and the like. It launched its own mini-information highway, the Minitel, in the 1980s, well ahead of the competition. It now has a fully digitised switching network, 5.7 million cable customers and 6.5 million minitel terminals in French homes and offices.

"No sector develops to maturity without having a handful of global players, and we intend to be among them," Mr Bon said, adding: "Only through alliances can this be done."

Alliances are indeed all the rage in the telecommunications industry. BT, the only leading European telecommunications company operating in a liberalised home market, was first off the mark with its Concert joint venture with MCI France Telecom has been attempting to confirm its Atlas link with Deutsche Telekom, for months, and is deep in negotiations with the competition authorities in Brussels.

Atlas, along with partner Sprint in the US, aims to provide multinational clients with global telecoms services – what Mr Bon calls the "single window" for business. It will be a direct competitor of BT's Concert and Univert, another US-European alliance offering business services.

The European Commission is concerned that the two continental telecommunications companies will use their dom-

inant positions in their domestic markets to keep out competitors. It is seeking assurances that the two countries will have liberalised regimes for telecommunications, and wants guarantees that alternative suppliers of telecommunications services – including utilities and cable companies – will be able to interconnect with the main telephone network.

BT echoes his view, and has complained to the Commission about the lack of competition in continental markets.

"These are questions that must be dealt with by governments," Mr Bon says. "They are basically political and not commercial issues. All we can say is that we want Atlas badly enough that the competition can come earlier rather than later."

He concedes, the Germans may be moving more slowly than the French. Brussels has asked that "alternative infrastructures" be liberalised by 1 January, two years before the deadline for full telecommunications deregulation. The Germans prefer a much later date, but may settle for July 1996 as a compromise. Further meetings are scheduled for this week.

"This is the last chance for Europe to play among the giants," Mr Bon said. BT has the advantage of being first in the market. But he warns them against complacency. "It's good that BT thinks they have an advantage," he said. "For my part, I worry about all competitors."

MATHEW HORSMAN

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## sport

FOOTBALL: Welcome win for former England manager as he struggles to adapt to his new life in the company of Wolves

## Taylor still to find the light

Some people go to Eastbourne to recuperate, or a spa town like Bath. Not Graham Taylor. He went to the Black Country, to Molineux, a speaking, newly rebuilt stadium laced with memories and heavier still with expectation.

Tomorrow it will be two years to the day since his nadir as manager of England - the defeat at Rotterdam which effectively ended England's World Cup before it had started. It is fair to say his rehabilitation still has some way to go.

In 18 months at Molineux he has taken his team to the brink of the play-offs, then into the play-offs. On the first occasion, Taylor's appointment inspired a revival only for the team to falter in the final weeks. Last season, they blew the chance of automatic promotion with one win in the last nine games.

This year, having again been the division's heaviest summer spenders, they have started poorly. Even Saturday's 2-1 win at Ipswich was unable to lift them into the top half of the table. But the League is only a quarter done and it is still very tight. Wolves are only a win off the play-off places, eight points from a promotion spot.

And yet the pressure is on and Taylor's recuperation is being tested. Twice in recent weeks he has walked out of press conferences, and according to observers, there has been a haunted and hunted look about him, his eyes darting about his inquisitors, trying to spot where the next loaded question may come from - and what lies behind the apparently innocent ones.

On Saturday there was little sign of that. Three points provide a greater shield than any minder or spin-doctor. Even when faced with one of his for-



GLENN MOORE COMMENTARY

mer tormentors - his journalistic inquisitor from that Rotterdam press conference - he was civil and honest. Not that that should be a surprise. The essential decency of the man has always been evident. So has his courage - unlike many managers, successful and otherwise, he has rarely shirked his responsibilities to the media and the wider public.

There remained, however, a sense of paranoia, a wariness and weariness about him. The tendency to run at the mouth has not been checked either.

"Was this week a turning point?" he was asked. "I think the thing is that when you actually look back you have got to go further ahead, you know what I mean? If, in another three months' time we are, sort of, winning and we have had the odd draw, we may look back and say this was a turning point. It is too early yet, it is five games [unbeaten] now. Only time... you never know when it is a turning point, it is easy to say, but you cannot tell. We will give it another couple of months before we can look back and say 'this might have been a turning point'."

There is sense in there, somewhere. But should anyone be surprised if he is scarred. Three years of abuse, often

personal, from both public and press would mark most people. The wonder of Taylor is that he keeps coming back for more.

Was he enjoying management again? "I have always enjoyed certain aspects - no one can enjoy every minute of their job. I became a manager in 1972, someone told me I am the longest-serving League manager and I wonder where the years have gone."

The recent weeks, he admitted, had been difficult. He had worried about the start. "You have got to win games," he said. "With everything I brought to the club, with my profile and the fact that money was made available, everyone expects it. It does not always work like that. Expectancy is so high at the club. I would rather be with an expectant club with passion and feeling than one where it does not really matter."

There did not seem much passion about Wolves at the beginning. Ipswich so dominated the first half-hour it was impossible to tell if Wolves were playing long-ball football, as they never kept possession long enough to find out. The inevitable first goal came after 28 minutes when Eric Young held back Alex Mathie after he had been turned on the edge of the box. Steve Sedgley scored from the spot.

A second should have followed five minutes later as a break by Mathie and Micky Stockwell set up Clans Thomson 12 yards out, only for the Dane to shoot casually and criminally over.

It was a telling error. With Stockwell still coming back, Wolves fed Goodman by the half-way line. Tony Mowbray, making his debut, recklessly committed himself and Goodman was away. Stockwell got



Face in a crowd: Graham Taylor (centre) and his staff look on anxiously as Wolves take three points at Ipswich on Saturday Photograph: Adam Scott

back but failed to tackle as Goodman beat the 17-year-old goalkeeper, Richard Wright, at the near post. Seven minutes later, Mark Atkins scrambled the ball in from a corner and, though the second-half was awful, Wolves had done enough.

Ipswich, shorn of Ian Marshall, looked pretty but lightweight. Sedgley was the most cultured player on the pitch, Geraint Williams the busiest, but they had no way past Wolves' three-man defence.

Dean Richards was the outstanding member of that trio,

bringing the ball out with aplomb. Taylor said he still needs work on his defensive qualities, but they can be taught; composure on the ball is a more elusive trait. Few of his team-mates have it, but while Wolves are not a purist's delight, they are not exclusively long-ball either. Darren Ferguson, in particular, still attempts to play in his father's traditions and Atkins is a good acquisition.

But even in victory there were unpleasant reminders for Taylor. As he signed autographs

for the home fans someone had a go at him and he walked away, shaking his head.

"That is part of it," he said. "It is not going to go away. I have to live with that. At the risk of sounding boastful, I think I live with it quite well."

However, it is the Wolves support he has to win over. They are still not convinced. Bobby Robson, another former England manager, one who previously managed Ipswich, was at the game. When the Ipswich fans acclaimed him - and booed Taylor - there were no coun-

tering cheers of support from the Wolves fans. They look at Barnsley and Millwall, both of whom have sold more than they have spent in recent years, and ponder the worth of Taylor's £4m transfer deficit.

And now Taylor must risk alienating them again. Wolves have scored nine goals in their last three games - and Steve Bull has been suspended for all of them. Will he recall him?

"The Wolves and Steve are the nearest thing I have ever been involved with to a one-man club," he said. "I will deal with

it in the right way to the benefit of the whole club."

As Taylor spoke, one could not help noticing the motto on the club blazer he wore: "Out of darkness, cometh the light". But does that old-gold glow presage the end of the tunnel, or is another train approaching? Goalscorers: Sedgley (28), 38; 1-0: Goodman (34); 1-1: Atkins (41); 1-2: Ipswich (44-45); Wright (45); Sedgley (46); 2-0: Wright (47); 2-1: Sedgley (48); 2-2: Wright (49); 2-3: Sedgley (50); 3-0: Sedgley (51); 3-1: Sedgley (52); 3-2: Sedgley (53); 3-3: Sedgley (54); 3-4: Sedgley (55); 3-5: Sedgley (56); 3-6: Sedgley (57); 3-7: Sedgley (58); 3-8: Sedgley (59); 3-9: Sedgley (60); 3-10: Sedgley (61); 3-11: Sedgley (62); 3-12: Sedgley (63); 3-13: Sedgley (64); 3-14: Sedgley (65); 3-15: Sedgley (66); 3-16: Sedgley (67); 3-17: Sedgley (68); 3-18: Sedgley (69); 3-19: Sedgley (70); 3-20: Sedgley (71); 3-21: Sedgley (72); 3-22: Sedgley (73); 3-23: Sedgley (74); 3-24: Sedgley (75); 3-25: Sedgley (76); 3-26: Sedgley (77); 3-27: Sedgley (78); 3-28: Sedgley (79); 3-29: Sedgley (80); 3-30: Sedgley (81); 3-31: Sedgley (82); 3-32: Sedgley (83); 3-33: Sedgley (84); 3-34: Sedgley (85); 3-35: Sedgley (86); 3-36: Sedgley (87); 3-37: Sedgley (88); 3-38: Sedgley (89); 3-39: Sedgley (90); 3-40: Sedgley (91); 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